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DILL PICKLE RAG
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4 SONGS



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'A duet can fill a lot of space, A duet can be enough!'

JASON ROMERO
p.24

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Thomas Kokta



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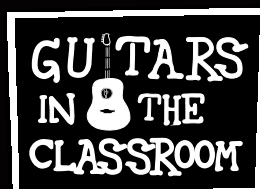
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Video Exclusives



TAKE TWO

Three duos—Pharis & Jason Romero (above), Ryanhood, and Grant Gordy & Ross Martin—demonstrate the power of two. (p. 24)



RIGHT-HAND WORKOUT

Classical picking patterns for steel-string players. (p. 56)



GET RHYTHM

A theory lesson you can count on. (p. 48)



NATIONAL T-14

National's first 14-fret cutaway tricone. (p. 74)

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When a classical guitarist goes in search of a fine, handmade, one-of-a-kind instrument—the kind that seems to have been built for you and you alone—he or she most likely begins at a shop dedicated to fine instruments, such as Guitar Salon International in Los Angeles or Guitars International in Cleveland. There our hypothetical shopper finds an impressive range of instruments to try out, a friendly staff with hands-on knowledge of the guitars, and very likely a fair and trusting policy on instrument trials and purchase terms.

The steel-string guitar enthusiast travels a far different path. There are many stores that deal in excellent, high-end factory built guitars, but most individual luthiers are on their own when it comes to both creating and marketing their wares. Dream Guitars in Asheville, North Carolina, is the great exception, but until a few more such stores emerge, the most efficient, enjoyable, and educational path to a dream instrument takes you to one or more of the handful of lutherie shows profiled in this issue by Brian Wise. In such far-flung and entertaining destinations as Woodstock, New York, Santa Barbara, California, or Cremona, Italy, you can meet scores of excellent guitar builders in person, hear their instruments demoed by superb players, play them yourself, and eavesdrop on the professional chat about building and finishing techniques, the characteristics of tonewoods, and the mysteries of acoustical design. Even without your checkbook in hand, the experience can be unforgettable.

Speaking of luthiers, be sure to read E.E. Bradman's interview on page 66 with Todd Cambio of Fraulini Guitars, whose passion for some of America's lesser-known historic builders is inspiring some awesome new guitars, and then check out JOI Guitars' Harmonic Hendrix Home on our "Great Acoustics" page.

It's fair to say that nearly all the acoustic guitars we play today, both steel- and nylon-stringed, evolved from Spanish designs and methods of construction, and that when we



think of the music of Spain it is classical/ flamenco guitar music that comes first to mind. This issue of *Acoustic Guitar* pays homage to the guitar in Spain with a pair of informative feature articles by Mark Small and Blair Jackson, a pair of beautiful miniatures to play by Spanish virtuoso and composer Francisco Tárrega, and a Weekly Workout lesson by Adam Perlmutter that introduces you to some right-hand picking patterns favored by classical composers you can easily adapt to the steel-string.

In addition to Tárrega's "Lagrima" and "Adelita," you can learn Eric Schoenberg's formidable arrangement of "Dill Pickles" (also known as "Dill Pickle Rag"), a piano rag composed in 1906 by Charles L. Johnson, and the Allman Brothers' more familiar acoustic landmark, "Little Martha."

And if you want to delve even more deeply into the guitar in Spain, consider joining us on *Acoustic Guitar*'s musical tour of Spain scheduled for May 4–14, 2019. Led by local guides and longtime *Classical Guitar* magazine editor Thérèse Wassily Saba, you'll be one of just 30 people to enjoy firsthand the music, guitars, foods, wines, arts, landscapes, and people of Spain. Learn more at Stringletter.com/Spain.

—David A. Lusteran, Editor
David.Lusteran@Stringletter.com

CORRECTION

In the August 2018 issue, on page 61, the tuning for "Pachelbel's Canon" is incorrectly stated as D A D G B D. The correct tuning is D A D G B E.

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Got a question or comment for *Acoustic Guitar*'s editors? Send e-mail to editors.ag@stringletter.com or snail-mail to *Acoustic Guitar* Editorial, 501 Canal Blvd., Suite J, Richmond, CA 94804.

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Senior Editor Blair Jackson
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WORTH THE WAIT

Thank you! I have been searching for a clear tutorial on amplification for years and finally it arrived ("Get Heard!" August 2018). People who already know this stuff act like it's intuitively obvious to the casual observer, but we mortals need it spelled out periodically.

—Rick Derer, Westmont, IL

It's articles like the one about busking (July 2018) that make AG so anticipated every month. Relevant, useful, and always interesting writing about what we all love. I disappear into bliss when I really get into playing. I go into a local coffee-and-lunch place and play to try to quiet my terror; I've only been able to let my family hear me for about 5 years. I'm Nick Drake minus the talent.

—Gordon Barnes, via Facebook

I learn so much from AG. Things I didn't know I needed to know. Thank you for making me wiser and giving me the information to take care of my guitar.

—Amie L Rankin, via Facebook

A NOTE ON NOTATION

Your August 2018 article "Between the Lines" provided an interesting history of notation. Now a bit of a rant on tablature: Why don't *Acoustic Guitar*, Hal Leonard, Mel Bay, et al., include timing and duration info in the tablature? The best tablature I have seen comes from John Stropes, who heads the fingerstyle guitar program at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (check out stropes.com for samples). It's undoubtedly the largest collection of transcriptions of Leo Kottke, and also includes material from Michael Hedges, Alex de Grassi, and others. Stropes editions are also accurate. One song I am working on from other sources has five variant transcriptions, and none specify the recording from which they were derived. I have to admit I have been spoiled, but the quality of published tablature generally leaves much to be desired. Okay, end of rant.

—Larry Johansen, via Facebook

HURT FEELINGS

Your article on Mississippi John Hurt (July 2018) shows the intricate bonds between musicians and their world of music. To have that in your journey is a rare gift.

—Robert Shuler, via Facebook

I had no idea John Oates owns John Hurt's Guild, and that he has that past connection to it. Very informative! The Gibson J-45 with the custom inlays that was owned by Hoskins came through a music store in Savage, Minnesota, a few years ago. It was being sold privately through a broker, but I actually got to play it a little and take

photos. The story goes that the guitar had been left behind in a house where Hoskins' daughter had been living, and was owned for years by a Minneapolis-area rock musician. I don't know who owns it now. A lot of the top had been worn off by a hyperactive flatpick. Hopefully its current owner is a fingerpicker!

—Jim Ohlschmidt, via Facebook

Learning to play Mississippi John Hurt's songs improved my skills dramatically. Basic and complex at the same time. Bliss!

—Jack Dorphy, via Facebook

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LEIGH RIGHTON

Fingerstyle Blues Guitar Meets String Quartet

Steve Dawson finds new textures for guitar instrumentals

BY PETE MADSEN

Steve Dawson may not be a household name, but with the release of 2014's *Rattlesnake Cage*, he put himself on the radar of many acoustic guitar fans, including me. The sideman, record producer, and family man has recently taken time out of his busy schedule to record a follow-up to *Cage* called *Lucky Hand*, which showcases his fluid playing alongside string quartet, harmonica, and mandolin.

A Canadian ex-pat, Dawson moved his family and recording studio operation to Nashville a few years back. His Henhouse Studio has produced music by Matt Patershuk, Kelly Joe Phelps, and John Hammond, as well as the Birds

of Chicago, with whom he is currently on tour.

Like *Rattlesnake Cage*, *Lucky Hand* features Dawson's playing on six-string, National Tricone, Weissenborn lap slide, and 12-string guitar. The all-instrumental album's song titles include references to places in and around his newly adopted town of Nashville. "The Circuit Rider of Pigeon Forge," "Bone Cave," and "Old Hickory Breakdown" paint an aural landscape of Southern rural charm and mystery. And the addition of strings has opened and enhanced Dawson's compositions, providing an air of sophistication. However, the mood is not high-brow, but intimate, humble, and inviting.

The interplay of guitar and mandolin on a song like "Little Harpeth" is layered and exquisite, with melody lines doubled, while a fanning guitar string effect adds a lush ambience. Dawson showcases his solo 12-string playing on "Hollow Tree Gap," with its incessant groove and quick-fingered dexterity. The album's final track, "Bugscuffle," brings us back home with Dawson's lovely solo playing on Weissenborn lap slide.

What prompted you to record a fingerstyle guitar record with string quartet?

I recorded *Rattlesnake Cage* about four years

ago and I wanted to follow that up, but then I started thinking I wanted to take that in some new directions. At the time, I was revisiting Ry Cooder's first records and a Phil Ochs record called *Greatest Hits*—which is not actually his greatest hits—and the common thread was Van Dyke Parks' and Ochs' wily string arrangements, which take pretty straight-ahead guitar music and turn it into something else. And then I contacted Jesse Zubot, who I have worked with for many years—we had a project called Zubot & Dawson that released three instrumental records. He had been doing a lot of string arranging recently. I had written the songs, and then we discussed them a bit to decide which would be the best to have string arrangements on.

Did you record the tracks together or separately?

We recorded together. It was really fun. The process was, I wrote the songs solo and recorded them on a phone. Then I sent them to him and was specific about which parts were set and which parts were a little stretchy; and then there are some parts which are completely improvised. He knew what my roadmap was, so we convened in Vancouver and recorded live.

It's me facing the four string players and I'm about 15 feet away from them, and that's how we did it.

Let's talk guitars. You played six-string, 12-string, Weissenborn, and a National Tricone on this album, correct?

That's right. And I think there is a little ukulele in there, as well.

Were you playing uke or was somebody else?

I overdubbed it. It's just a little textural thing on a couple of songs.

What kind of 12-string are you playing?

It's a Taylor Leo Kottke signature model which is designed to be tuned down to C#, but I tune it down further to a B. That thing is a cannon—it's really unruly. If I played it all the time I would feel like it's more under control, but I always feel like it's about to come bursting out of my hands. I like writing on it. Sometimes you come up with fingerpicking patterns and you can get in a rut, but as soon as you get a 12-string under your fingers, all the voicings

change and everything flips around. It's kind of an exciting way to write music.

Do you play the 12-string in any open tunings?

The open tuning I have landed on for a lot of stuff is tuning the 6th and 1st strings down to D: D A D G B D [double dropped D]. That, for me, has come in really handy as a sideman for fingerstyle and slide guitar. I like it because I can relate to the low register as open D tuning [D A D F# A D], and the high register I can relate to as open G tuning [D G D G B D], and also the middle four strings are in standard tuning, which means I can fret a lot of normal chords as well. All the 12-string tunes on this record are using this tuning, except tuned lower.



With the six-string I used open D and open G, and a weird open C. I don't often write in standard tuning, but on this album I think there are two in standard.

What's the weird C tuning?

C G C G C, and then sometimes I make the high string a unison on the C and sometimes I use a D on there. That's sort of my main Weissenborn tuning. On this album there is one six-string song where it is that tuning but the top note is an F: C G C G C F. I got that tuning from Kelly Joe Phelps.

On the resonator are you using open G?

On the resonator I use double dropped D, open G, or open D. The Tricone does not like being in C.

Too low?

Yeah, there is not enough tension to hold the cones in place or something.

Do you use fingerpicks?

I do when I play the Weissenborn. I use ProPicks, the ones that don't have any fingertips in them, so it still feels like your fingertips but you're getting the volume of the metal as well. For regular six- and 12-string guitar I only use a thumbpick.

Being a producer and engineer, do you have a favored method for miking an acoustic guitar for recording?

I experiment, but my main thing for recording acoustics is I base it around a mono recording concept. There's generally one mic giving 95 percent of the sound. The modern concept of stereo miking the guitar is cool, but it makes everything sound larger than life. For my music, I don't want that. I like it to sound warm and inviting and like you're sitting five feet away, rather than shoving your head right inside of the guitar. I feel like a lot of modern guitar music is presented very forward and in your face. I really like old recordings. Also, I don't sit very still when I play and that can present problems when you are miking in stereo.

Obviously, fingerstyle blues informs a lot of your playing, but are there any other players you draw inspiration from?

Sure, definitely Doc Watson is a big inspiration for me. Chet Atkins and Merle Travis, as far as the non-blues guys. For fingerstyle acoustic guitar, Tampa Red was a really big one; Lonnie Johnson was a big one; Ry Cooder and David Lindley. I got into John Fahey and Leo Kottke when I was pretty young and learned some of their stuff when I could. Some of the Hawaiian players like Sol Hoopii and King Bennie Nawahi were influential for the Weissenborn.

AC

In addition to the aforementioned guitars, Dawson has recently acquired a Martin OO-DB Jeff Tweedy model, which he used for Lucky Hand and likes very much. You can check out Steve's music and studio at stevedawson.ca.



LUTHERIE SHOW

The new wave of custom-guitar shows have become hot destinations

BY BRIAN WISE

Not long ago, it seemed as if lutherie shows were going the way of video rental stores. One of the first events of its kind, the Healdsburg Guitar Festival, in Santa Rosa, California, folded in 2013 after nearly two decades in operation. The beloved Montreal Guitar Show concluded a six-year run in 2012. Events in Memphis, Miami, and also Newport, Florida, reached a coda amid financial strains.

But in the past three years, lutherie shows have staged a resurgence. Whether it's the Artisan Guitar Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania,

the Holy Grail Guitar Show in Berlin, Germany, or the Vancouver International Guitar Festival, in Canada, new festivals for handmade guitar enthusiasts have surfaced on multiple continents. The field has grown crowded enough that this past January, organizers of six of the largest shows formed an alliance to coordinate their efforts.

The events draw guitar fanatics through a mix of exhibitions, master classes, panels, and demonstration performances, often with a tourism component for family members in search of non-guitar-related leisure activities.



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SHOW EVOLUTION

John Detrick, who in 2017 produced the inaugural Artisan Guitar Show in Harrisburg, says he wanted to create a showcase for handmade fretted instruments, as distinct from the factory-made models that dominate large trade shows and traditional retail. “When you think about music stores—and I’ve been in many—you can walk in and see what truly are extraordinary instruments from a lot of mass producers,” said Detrick, 63. “But unless you walk into a very unique guitar store, you’re not going to see these handcrafted instruments.”

GUITAR TOURISM

An exhibitors’ table at a three-day luthier show can cost \$1,500 or more, compounded by additional entry fees, travel expenses, and the cost of shipping instruments. And while sales are not guaranteed, luthiers concede the events are an ongoing part of their business model.

“Guitar shows are still a major player for people moving their stuff,” says Bryan Galloup, a luthier who runs a guitar-building school in Big Rapids, Michigan. “For a young builder, they have to sell a guitar [to break even]. For other people, once they’re more established as

builders, it’s the continuously being seen at a show that’s really good for them. It would be bad for me to all of a sudden stop going.”

Touristic appeal is a big part of the festival equation. Italy’s long-running Acoustic Guitar Village was held in a medieval castle in the Ligurian town of Sarzana for 18 years before it merged in 2016 with Cremona Musica, a trade show for musical instruments. “It was very impressive, like a journey into the medieval era,” says artistic advisor Alessio Ambrosi of the old location. The show is now set in the historic violin-making city of Cremona, a



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UNESCO World Heritage site, where Ambrosi encourages attendees to visit the Museo del Violino and other local landmarks.

Promotional materials for the second annual La Conner Guitar Festival emphasized the historic charms of coastal La Conner, Washington. The event, which drew 52 luthiers in May (up from 40 in 2017), partly drew inspiration from the Woodstock Invitational Luthier's Showcase, now one of the more established gatherings and scheduled for this October 26–28.

The Woodstock Invitational was founded in 2009 and touts a jamboree-like assortment of performances, workshops, and exhibits held throughout the famed Catskill Mountains town. In October 2017, Woodstock drew 1,500 attendees and 45 luthiers over three days; 63 instruments were sold or commissioned as a result of the show, says founder Baker Rorick. “That’s huge,” he says. Luthiers make up much of the show’s audience, who

appreciate quirky touches like break rooms stocked with pumpkin pie.

“Woodstock’s a hang,” Galloup says. “People go because the old guys are there, it’s a funky venue, everybody stays in these cool cabins, and it’s an event. I don’t know if that could survive any other place but there.”

Indeed, when the Santa Barbara Guitar Celebration was founded in 2016, organizers grappled with how to foster a culture of guitar enthusiasts while also luring more casual attendees from the immediate area. Founder Kevin Gillies says he’s still reaching for the right recipe. “We don’t have the same cultural support in Southern California as Baker does at Woodstock,” Gillies says. “There’s a tremendous long history of craftsmanship there. Since we don’t have that same culture, it’s a much easier sell to get people to show up for music.”

After featuring artists including the finger-style guitarist Richard Smith and slack-key

player Jim “Kimo” West in 2017, for its next edition, in 2019, Gillies plans to spin off the performances in a citywide music festival that will take place in wine bars and restaurants. With the aim of attracting families, Gillies moved the event from a local fairground to the Hilton Beachfront Resort, which includes views of the Pacific Ocean.

SHOWS IN THE INSTAGRAM AGE

For several years, Canada’s rich lutherie tradition was the focus of the Montreal Guitar Show. Organizers of the Vancouver International Guitar Festival, scheduled for August 11–12, have sought to build on that legacy while promoting British Columbia, known as a leading source of tonewood. A lineup of 100 exhibitors is expected at Vancouver this year, including such names as Ervin Somogyi, Nik Huber, and Larrivée Guitars. Festival co-founder Meredith Coloma stresses the importance of effective social media promotion.



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MANZER.COM

"I went to a few guitar shows and they were basically an expensive trip to hang out with other luthiers," says the 27-year-old Coloma. "They were very poorly marketed and the luthiers were pretty upset at the turnout of buyers. You don't want to compete among 100 luthiers for three people who walk through the door. After two guitar shows that were not up to snuff, I thought about my city. This is a destination for people from rich countries, so I do really well in terms of my sales locally."

Around \$250,000 worth of instruments were sold at the inaugural Vancouver event in 2017, says co-founder Shaw Saltzberg. But those sales represent only half of all transactions; others trickle in months later as a result of festival meetings. This is largely because buyers seek a degree of customization. "Buyers want to be involved in the process, which is really important when you're

spending \$7,500 to \$15,000 for a guitar," Saltzberg said. "It's an experience. The builders like to build these relationships."

While guitar show veterans will describe pre-event deals in hotel rooms and out of car trunks, these may constitute a minority. "It's pretty rare that you'll get a sale right over the table," says Alton "Bear" Acker, executive director of the Association of Stringed Instrument Artisans (ASIA), a trade group.

When ASIA formed in 1988, the vintage instrument craze was just gaining traction, as Baby Boomers were rekindling their love of guitars. That boom had waned by decade's end, but guitar shows, including Healdsburg and Montreal, continued. (ASIA hosts a biennial symposium near C.F. Martin's guitar museum and factory in Nazareth, Pennsylvania).

Inevitably, guitar show audiences skew toward men over 50, a demographic that's saved enough money for a handcrafted instrument and

is often reaching retirement age. "I definitely see that there's an aging nature to the audience at the show," says the Artisan show's Detrick. Sensing a need to highlight diversity, both the ASIA symposium and Berlin's Holy Grail Guitar Show have recently hosted panels on women luthiers, while Woodstock's organizers are planning a slate of workshops featuring women in the field for 2018.

Saltzberg of the Vancouver festival is less pessimistic about the age balance, suggesting that choosy Millennials drawn to artisanal products are starting to attend. "These are people making their own small businesses devoted to camping gear and bicycles that are built by hand," he said. "The old-school barber shops have turned into social places. With our guitars, we get a lot of great response from just that alone. It's not just for old men like me."

Not to be downplayed is the role that seminars and performances play in a successful



COURTESY OF THE MONTREAL GUITAR SHOW/KENT KALLBERG

luthier show. Weeks or months before shows, guitarists offer their services for instrument demonstrations; some festivals distribute musician rosters to exhibitors who shop for a performer to play their instruments.

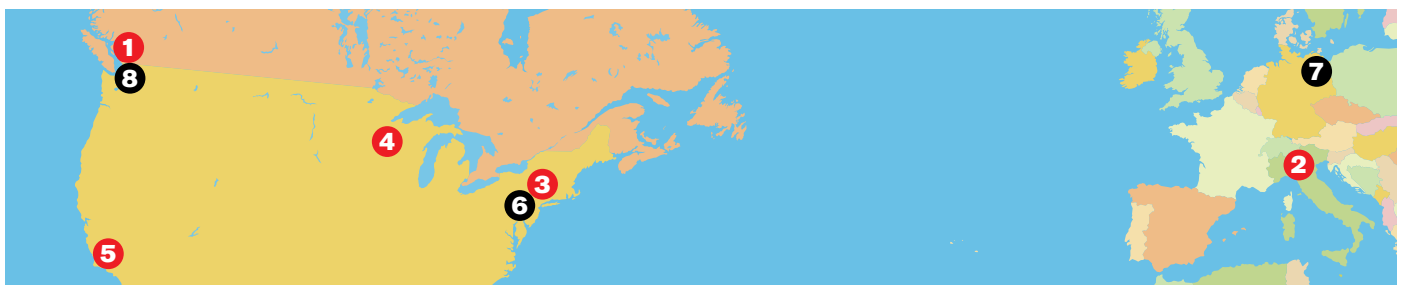
Linda Manzer, a Toronto luthier, says guitarists offering demo performances of her guitars routinely approach her, but she cautions that it's a tricky relationship. "I used to avoid it, because even really good players have a hard time adapting to an instrument they've just met," she notes. "Their job is to showcase the guitar. That's why they're being hired by us. So you have to have the kind of player who understands that dynamic."

Manzer has also learned to manage her expectations about sales. "I'm a little different because I expect very little in the way of sales," she says. "I actually go mostly for the sense of community because I really enjoy being around all of the other guitar makers. Also, I like players to be able to see and try my guitars."

This communal atmosphere is an intangible factor that new shows strive to create, including those in Europe, where a tradition of guilds has tended to segment the field into distinct camps. But this may be changing due to organizations like the European Guitar Builders Association, founded in 2013. "In the last seven or eight years, the scene of acoustic guitar in Italy has

grown very much," says Ambrosi of the Acoustic Guitar Village. "There are events in little towns all around Italy. That means fingerstyle, flatpicking, and songwriting."

"The luthier community is a community and there's an incredible generosity of spirit," adds Woodstock's Rorick. "I've watched it happen again and again in my own show where some fledgling luthier will approach a luminary, and say, 'Gee, could I ask you a question about a certain technique or material or construction?' Invariably the guy will say, 'I'll show you everything I know. It's going to help you make a better instrument—and inspire a musician to make better music.'" **AG**



GUITAR SHOWS

2018

- 1 August 11–12, 2018**
Vancouver International Guitar Festival
vancouverguitarfestival.com
- 2 September 28–30, 2018**
Acoustic Guitar Village at Cremona Musica
cremonamusica.com
- 3 October 26–28, 2018**
Woodstock Invitational Luthier's Showcase
woodstockinvitational.com

2019

- 4 August 10–11, 2019**
Twin Cities Guitar Show
twincitiesguitarshow.com
- 5 August 23–25, 2019**
Santa Barbara Guitar Celebration
sbcelebration.org

RECENTLY HELD SHOWS

(No follow-up shows announced)

- 6 Artisan Guitar Show** in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, artisanguitarshow.com
- 7 Holy Grail Guitar Show**, in Berlin, Germany, holygrailguitarshow.com
- 8 La Conner Guitar Festival**, laconnerguitarfestival.com

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FLORENCIA P. MARANO

A Different Kind of Blues

Sunny War brings her street-wise style to the studio

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

The carnival atmosphere of the boardwalk in Venice Beach, California, seems an unlikely place to encounter a musician like Sunny War, who has been busking there since she was a teenager. The farthest thing from a grandstander, the young musician sings softly, with an aching intimacy. Along with her original songs she plays some well-known covers, but in such unconventional ways they're nearly unrecognizable; in her hands, even the Beatles' "She Loves You" comes across like a lonesome ballad. And then there's her guitar playing—a startling take on fingerstyle technique, with melodic riffs dancing over bluesy bass lines. The overall effect is something like a blend of Skip James, Nick Drake, and Joan Armatrading, with a depth and subtlety more suited to the stage than the street.

War does play stages, too. Her latest album of original songs, *With the Sun*, came out in February, and when I catch up with her by phone at home in Los Angeles, she is just back from a North American tour with blues-woman Valerie June. But War credits the busking experience as fundamental to her style, and she still sometimes takes her battery-powered amp and Guild flattop out to the boardwalk.

"I think the best thing is that you learn how to be really rhythmic on your own," says War. "Busking is like practicing with a metronome. I started playing a lot of covers that I don't necessarily love, but I thought I'd probably get more tips if I played songs that people know. To play these covers, I'm imagining how the song is with a full band, so I'm always trying to re-create as much of it as I can with just one guitar."

War, 27, got an early start on that guitar quest. Born Sydney Ward in Nashville (she got the nickname Sunny in middle school and later dropped the *d* in Ward for her performing name), she picked up the guitar at seven—at first trying to play lap style because she couldn't reach across the body. Early lessons gave her a foundation in blues, and when she was 11, a guitar teacher showed her "Blackbird,"

inadvertently laying the foundation for her idiosyncratic fingerpicking style—she uses only her index finger and thumb except when strumming. "That was the last time anyone really taught me anything," she recalls, "and I just kept playing like that because I thought it sounded better."

By high school, already well versed in hard rock guitar, War began to discover some of the masters of acoustic fingerpicking. "When I was a freshman, I got obsessed with Chet Atkins," she says. "I can't remember how I started listening to him, but I learned how to play 'Mr. Sandman.' The other stuff I was playing

following something," she says. "Or, a lot of times, if I write a song and I write the guitar part first, I can't really come up with another melody for the vocals, so it's just easier to sing along to what's already there."

The sounds that War coaxes out of her guitar are certainly not easy to achieve. Her thumb has the snap of classic country blues, and on top she adds ornate lead lines with rapid-fire hammer-ons and pull-offs. To my ears, on songs like "He Is My Cell" on *With the Sun*, she sounds strikingly similar to Malian masters like Ali Farka Toure or the guitarists of Tinariwen. But, as it turns out, War had never

heard Malian guitar music until listeners on the boardwalk a few years ago told her about the resemblance—and then she looked it up on YouTube.

"To me it just sounded like a different kind of blues," she says, "but it did remind me of how I play. I came to the conclusion that that's just inherently how black people play guitar. I don't know—I have no explanation for that, or even how much the old American blues guitarists sound like that. It's really interesting that they could sound so similar and not have known of each other."

The same is true of the similarities I hear between War and Joan Armatrading, especially in her unvarnished vocal style. Once again, War only recently learned of

the pioneering UK singer-songwriter (and potent acoustic guitarist) from people on the boardwalk—and then she looked up Armatrading's music and became a fan.

Like Armatrading's music, the songs on *With the Sun* feel raw and vulnerable, often reflecting struggles through hard times. War has seen plenty of those. As a kid, shifting between the care of her mother and grandmother, she relocated every few years—Nashville, Detroit, Denver, L.A.—and spent much of her teen years living on the street and out of a van, a period she recalls hazily because of heavy drinking and drug use. "I'm a drunk and a dreamer/I'm a punk, closet screamer," she



before—I was learning all the AC/DC songs and Slayer—I could learn by ear. It would take a while, but I could figure it out. But I couldn't figure out Chet Atkins, and it kind of did something to me: 'Oh, this is real guitar-playing!' After that, I got more into Mississippi John Hurt and Elizabeth Cotten."

All these fingerpickers were highly melodic, and War spent countless hours woodshedding with independent melodies and bass lines. Like Hurt, Cotten, and many acoustic blues players, she often picks the melody along with her vocal.

"I sing along to what I'm playing on guitar because it's hard for me to sing without



sings in “Gotta Live It.” “The man I sleep with ain’t the man I love/His dysfunction fits me like a glove.”

Though her lyrical themes can be bleak, War’s songs somehow manage to be simultaneously mournful and comforting. As she asks in the poignant opening track of her new album, “How would you know if you had a heart/If it wasn’t broken?”

Following the independent release of *With the Sun*, War is on a creative roll but remains skeptical about sustaining a career as a performing songwriter. Over the years she has had some industry breaks—a Gibson endorsement, tour dates with Keb’ Mo’, gigs in South America and Europe, representation by a major booking agency—and she has also seen opportunities vanish as quickly as

they arrived. “One time I made a lot of money on the tour,” she says, “and I spent it and it was gone, you know. And then I had to pay my rent, and I had to go busking.”

Whatever the future holds, she is adamant about not allowing the business to compromise her art.

‘I started playing a lot of covers that I don’t necessarily love, but I thought I’d probably get more tips if I played songs that people know.’

somebody wait until they felt inspired enough to write a whole album. I’m always going to be a musician, but I don’t know if I will always be able to sell music. I can’t train myself to think of art as a product.”

AC

WHAT SUNNY WAR PLAYS

Her guitar is a 1989 Guild True American DC-1E NT, a cutaway acoustic-electric dreadnought, nicknamed Big Baby.

She uses D’Addario strings, .013s (mediums) or heavier. Light strings (and electric guitars in general), she says, don’t work with her aggressive playing style. For the most part, she stays in standard tuning, often using a Dunlop capo high on the neck. All of the songs on *With the Sun* are in standard except “Till I’m Dead,” played in open G with the capo at the ninth fret.

For busking, she plugs her guitar and vocal mic into a battery-powered Roland Street Cube.

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a black sleeveless top and a black long-sleeved arm warmer, is playing a classical guitar. She is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is dark with some faint, abstract white lines.

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It Takes Two

Three acoustic duos—Pharis and Jason Romero, Ryanhood, and Grant Gordy and Ross Martin—share how they work together to create tapestries of sound

Guitars go beautifully in pairs. Two players can, of course, pump out twice the volume. But the real power of a guitar duo is the ability to broaden the range of sound and expression beyond what one instrument and set of hands can do.

In a duo, one player can hold down the rhythm while the other cuts loose on a solo. One can cover the low end as the other shifts up the neck. While one guitarist drives the rhythm with a percussive strum, the other can add ringing arpeggios on top. From interlocking rhythms to wide, piano-like harmonies and melodic counterpoint, two guitars—skillfully and tastefully employed—can cover a tremendous amount of musical territory.

This kind of expressive range is plainly audible in the music of the three emerging acoustic guitar duos featured below: Pharis and Jason Romero, Ryanhood, and Grant Gordy and Ross Martin. Their styles are quite different—the Romeros carry on the deep duet traditions of old-time music and bluegrass, while Ryanhood plays kinetic folk rock, and Gordy and Martin draw on everything from jazz and classical to fiddle tunes in their virtuosic instrumental music. Beneath the differences, all these duos share a commitment to creating a full-bodied and complete sound with two guitars—nothing missing, and nothing wasted.

I spoke with these duos to find out more about how they work together and what tools and techniques they use, and to glean their advice on creating dynamic arrangements with two guitars. All of the artists shared an example based on one of their tunes, too,

which is transcribed here. Check out the accompanying videos, and expanded transcriptions, at acousticguitar.com.

PHARIS AND JASON ROMERO

As partners in music, marriage, and instrument making—they run the J. Romero Banjo Company together—Pharis and Jason Romero are a duo on every level. “Because we live together, we work together, we parent together, we make music together, we literally are 24/7-ers,” says Pharis. “Our phrasing is similar even when we speak now.”

Long before they met, Pharis and Jason had similar musical inspirations too—especially old-time music and early country duos like the Louvin Brothers, the Blue Sky Boys, and the Delmore Brothers. They credit Gillian Welch and David Rawlings for helping mainstream listeners rediscover the power of a stripped-down acoustic duo. “A duet can fill a lot of space,” says Jason. “A duet can be enough. I think they helped recalibrate people’s ears to that.”

Like Welch and Rawlings, the Romeros blend beautifully—both their voices and instruments—as can be heard on their new album, *Sweet Old Religion*. Aside from tunes where Jason picks a five-string banjo over Pharis’ rhythm guitar, they duet with vintage Gibson flattops, delivering original songs that in many cases could be mistaken for traditional tunes.

In the duo’s music, the vocals take center stage, and that’s where their arranging process begins. As a first step, they try singing a song

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

IT TAKES TWO

in five or six keys to find the sweet spot. “There’s a lot of experimenting,” Pharis says, “figuring out the key for our voices, who’s singing lead, who’s singing harmony.”

Once they've picked a key and mapped out vocal roles, the Romeros focus on finding the best guitar positions and differentiating their accompaniment parts. In a typical tune, Pharis holds down the lower end; she plays with a flatpick and, instead of a straight boom-chuck bass/strum pattern, tends to mix in light eighth-note strums (as in booma-chucka) inspired by Tony Rice's backup style. Jason often capos higher on the neck, cross-picks chords, and adds harmony lines and solos, using a three-finger picking technique adapted from banjo.

In **Example 1**, you can see how this approach plays out in their original song “Old World Style,” from *Sweet Old Religion*. Pharis capos at the first fret and plays out of E shapes (to sound in F), using a booma-chucka or boom-chucka picking pattern, while Jason capos at the fifth fret and plays out of C shapes, cross-picking the chords and adding subtle fills. In the yodeling section, Jason plays the melody in unison with Pharis’ vocal, and this guitar phrase also serves as the song’s intro, as shown in measures 1–4.

SPOTLIGHT THE MELODY

One lesson of the Romeros' guitar arrangements is the power of melody. When you're



Pharis and Jason Romero

ODIE PONTO

working up a guitar part, try doubling, echoing, or harmonizing the melody, as Jason often does. Pharis describes his guitar as another voice in the songs. "If I'm singing lead," she says, "he'll play guitar parts that feel almost like harmonies in the background."

In his fills and solos, too, Jason emphasizes the melody rather than noodling over the chords. "I had that hammered into me in bluegrass," he says. "The best bluegrass banjo players just play the melody in an interesting way. I'm always trying to play the melody pretty simply."

WHAT THEY PLAY

The Romeros are big fans of vintage Martins, Gibsons, and Nationals—and actually suffered the loss of all of their instruments when their banjo shop burned to the ground in 2016. The shop is back up and running in the same location in Horsefly, British Columbia, and they're slowly rebuilding their collection.

Currently, they play a pair of Gibsons chosen for a specific tonal contrast. Phariss picks a 1939 J-35 that has a deeper, woodier sound compared with the percussive bark of Jason's circa 1936 L-00. "They complement

Example 1

***Guitar 1 (Capo V)**

C **G7** **C**

with thumbpick and fingers

etc.

****Guitar 2 (Capo I)**

E **B7** **E**

etc.

*** Jason Romero; music sounds a perfect fourth higher than written**

****Pharis Romero; music sounds a minor second higher than written**

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Ryanhood: Ryan David Green (left)
& Cameron Hood

each other,” she says, “and aren’t so blendy that they get lost.” For banjo, Jason performs with a five-string model he custom-built with woods salvaged from the fire.

Both string their guitars with John Pearse phosphor bronze medium lights, swapping the .022 third string for a .024. Pharis uses a G7th capo and BlueChip picks, while Jason uses a Kyser capo and banjo-style Dunlop picks: a plastic thumbpick and two brass fingerpicks. On banjo with the duo, however, Jason usually plays with his bare fingers. “For the most part I want that thick, low, kind of

underwater sound on banjo with Pharis,” he says, “so it’s not just shrill and harsh.”

The duo uses mics only onstage. For single miking, they play through an Ear Trumpet Edwina. With a four-mic setup, they use a pair of Shure SM87s for vocals, and mic their instruments with either Telefunken M60 small-diaphragm condensers or (in touchier sound situations) Shure Beta 57s.

RYANHOOD

Ryan David Green first got the idea of forming an acoustic duo with Cameron Hood,

a high school friend in Tucson, Arizona, when he heard Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds’ 1999 album *Live at Luther College*. “I was super excited by all the cool, fiery playing that Tim Reynolds was doing on that record with the songwriting of Dave Matthews,” says Green. “So initially I wanted that sort of a model with Cameron.”

The Ryanhood duo began with similarly defined roles, with Hood as the main songwriter and Green on lead guitar. But over time the partnership developed to where they co-write all their songs. “It’s hard, ego-wise, to let somebody manipulate everything you write,” says Green, “but the results are better and more exciting.”

The duo’s rock roots are evident in their high-energy performances and especially in the guitar work of Green, a Berklee-trained player capable of full-on shredding. Their music taps into contemporary folk and pop too, in the vein of Jason Mraz or John Mayer, showcasing tight vocal harmonies as much as instrumental interplay.

On guitar, the two players have broadly defined roles. “I’m playing more of the lower walking parts or just holding down more of a foundation,” says Hood. “We both do play chords, but typically Ryan will be doing either the soloing or the higher voicings, little melodic chimey parts.”

In keeping with their electric guitar backgrounds, Hood and Green tend not to use

Example 2

Guitar 1 tuning: D G D G B E

***Guitar 1**

Em D C

1. G 2. G

etc.

****Guitar 2**

etc.

*Ryan David Green
**Cameron Hood

IT TAKES TWO

capos. On tour they tune their guitars down a half step, just to ease the vocal strain, and often use the lowered equivalent of dropped D (with the sixth string tuned to C#).

In addition, they experiment with tunings, in many cases altering just one string. Hood's favorite is raising the second string a half step (to C if the guitar's in standard tuning) for "a nice little extra jangle" when playing in C major or A minor. For the song "Embers," from their recent album *Yearbook*, Green drops his third string to E. "I've done songs in the full open-D tuning and all that stuff," he says, "but I often find [changing] just one of the inner strings makes such a dramatic change compositionally that it's all I'll need."

Ryanhood's song "I Didn't Put Anything Into Your Place," shown in **Example 2**, is a case study in subtle arranging for two guitars. Green tunes his bottom two strings down a whole step and plays an intricate fingerstyle pattern up the neck, while Hood (in standard tuning) fingerpicks supporting power-chord-type voicings on the low end—Green compares Hood's part to the left hand of a piano player. As the song progresses, Hood adds more of a percussive backbeat and eventually switches to full strumming with a pick. "The song feels like it grows," says Hood, "because my part starts so quietly and so simply."

MAKE IT COUNT

While there's nothing wrong with two guitars banging out the same chords, Green and Hood say that if you want to take fuller advantage of the duo format, have each player take on specific jobs.

"If you're playing a second guitar part, a good question to ask is, will it be missed if it's not there?" says Green. "You know you've come up with something good, something essential, when a song begins to hinge on your contribution, your additional voicings."

Ryanhood's guitar arrangements are so locked in together that both musicians feel as if they can't even play them with one guitar. "If there's a harmony line that I've written to connect one section to the other, we will separate that line out," says Hood. "I will play these three notes and he'll play these higher three notes, so we're literally playing in harmony, even though either one of us is capable of playing it alone. We've written the songs so that the other is indispensable."

WHAT THEY PLAY

Ryanhood's Cameron Hood plays a 2005 Takamine EF341SCX acoustic-electric, amplified through an L.R. Baggs Venue DI and Boss RV-3 digital reverb/delay pedal. He uses D'Addario EJ17 phosphor bronze mediums, a Kyser capo,



Grant Gordy (left) and Ross Martin

and InTuneGP .73 mm Delrin picks. Ryan David Green plays a 2014 custom dreadnought built in Tucson by the late amateur luthier Beth Mayer. The guitar is amplified with an L.R. Baggs Anthem SL pickup/mic, run through a Baggs Venue DI and MXR Carbon Copy delay pedal. Green uses D'Addario EXP17 coated phosphor bronze strings, a D'Addario NS Tri-Action capo, and Wegen picks.

To add percussive kick to certain songs, Hood and Green use PorchBoards for bass thump along with foot tambourines. For further sonic variety, Green switch-hits on mandolin (an unmarked mystery model purchased in a pawnshop) and Hood plays a tenor ukulele (made by Beth Mayer).

GRANT GORDY AND ROSS MARTIN

Few guitar duos would have the chutzpah or chops to tackle bluegrass, bebop, Bach, and hard-to-classify original compositions all on the same album, as Grant Gordy and Ross Martin do on the instrumental duets collection *Year of the Dog*. This mix is no self-conscious statement of eclecticism, though—it's simply a reflection of their backgrounds and sensibilities.

The two guitarists first crossed paths in Colorado around 15 years ago. A disciple of David Grisman's Dawg music (and, from 2008 to 2014, guitarist in Grisman's band), Gordy recognized a kindred spirit in Martin, a seasoned bluegrass picker who'd earned a degree in jazz and studied classical guitar as well. "Ross was one of the first people I met who could flatpick but could actually play jazz—he knew a bunch of tunes and was transcribing Keith Jarrett, and was really a broad musician," Gordy recalls. "So it felt like that left us with carte blanche to do whatever we could conceive of."

Gordy and Martin both eventually settled in New York City and began gigging as a duo in addition to their many other projects—Gordy currently plays with fiddler (and Grisman alumnus) Darol Anger in the string band Mr. Sun, and Martin is a longtime member of the Matt Flinner Trio.

As with the guitar partnership of Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge, Gordy and Martin have fluid roles when playing together. Although there are passages where one holds down chords while the other solos, they switch effortlessly into playing harmonized lines, tossing improvised phrases back and forth, and creating all sorts of rhythmic textures along the way.

"Darol Anger, our fiddle friend, has said music is the only kind of conversation you can have where everybody's talking at the same time, which is a great way to think about it," says Gordy. "My favorite kind of music tends to be conversational, where everybody's really listening and responsive and able to make decisions in the moment about how the narrative is being guided."

In their arrangements, Gordy and Martin travel all around the (usually uncapoed) neck, consciously spreading their parts. "If Grant's playing more open position, lower chords and covering some of the bass notes," says Martin, "then I'll maybe go for smaller voicings up higher, three-note or two-note or just something that would be in a different range that he wouldn't be able to grab."

Some of their music takes a more formal/classical approach, like Martin's original "Sweep," an excerpt of which is shown in **Example 3**. "The inspiration for this tune," says Martin, "was to create parts that use both fretted notes and open strings to create a cohesive sound that could only



be achieved with two guitars.” In the videos on acousticguitar.com, you can watch Gordy and Martin play the intricate parts separately and then together. Though the combined effect sounds like multilayered fingerstyle (and Martin does maintain right-hand fingernails for classical-style playing), in fact both players are cross-picking single notes with a flatpick.

KNOW THE FORM

One key to duo playing, says Gordy, is practicing and internalizing any song to the point where you have a strong sense of the time and the form and can leave space.

“You don’t want to overplay just so you don’t lose your place,” he says. “If you trust the person that you’re playing with, whether it’s because you’ve talked about how you’re going to approach a tune or because you’ve played a lot together, then the form and the time is still going to be there. You won’t have this pressure to state where it is all the time by wiggling your fingers around constantly just so you don’t get lost.”

WHAT THEY PLAY

Grant Gordy’s main acoustic guitar is a 1944 Martin 000-18. He uses D’Addario EJ17 phosphor bronze medium strings, D’Andrea Pro Plec

1.5 mm picks, and Elliott capos. For electric gigs he plays a Hofner Jazzica archtop, with D’Addario round-wound nickel strings, through a Henriksen amp.

Ross Martin plays a 2002 Collings D2H with John Pearse phosphor bronze medium strings, Wegen TF 120 picks, and Elliott capos.

For duo gigs, Gordy and Martin prefer using two condenser mics for their guitars. In louder settings where mics alone don’t work, Martin amplifies his guitar with a K&K Pure Mini pickup and an Audio-Technica ATM350 cardioid condenser clip-on mic, blended with a Grace FELiX preamp.

AG

Example 3

C7sus4

*Guitar 1

**Guitar 2

*Grant Gordy
**Ross Martin

Asus4 *play five times*

etc.

etc.

Dynamic Duets

How to make the most of playing with two guitars

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

Let's say you're playing with another guitarist and you decide to do a tune you both know in the same key, with the same set of chord shapes. You can fall right in together and sound fine, but you're essentially playing the same thing. So how do you go beyond doubling parts like this and take better advantage of having two instruments and two sets of hands?

Creating a full-fledged duo sound doesn't necessarily require playing anything tricky or fancy. Especially if you're accustomed to playing solo, what you need to do is adapt your approach to the duo format—by listening closely to both instruments and finding parts that support and enhance each other.

To illustrate, this lesson takes a simple chord progression and shows five strategies for developing complementary duet parts. In the videos on acousticguitar.com, you can see the two parts in each example played separately and then together.

1 PARE DOWN AND SPREAD OUT

The progression used throughout the lesson is Am–C–G–D; in number terms, that's a common i–III–V–IV in the key of A minor. These chords can all be played with easy open shapes, so that would be the go-to for most guitarists—and that's where we'll start, with both guitars in open position.

If one guitarist plays full voicings of these chords and strums a dense rhythm, that leaves very little room for the second guitarist to contribute anything meaningful. A better approach is to pare down both parts and separate into different pitch ranges, as shown in **Example 1**. For Guitar 1, go low, focusing on bass notes and partial chords mostly on the bottom three strings; play with all downstrokes and a rock feel. That pared-down part leaves space for Guitar 2 to add a pattern on the top three strings—using just the upper portion of the same open chord shapes.

While a single guitarist could play bigger chord voicings and cover the notes played here by two guitars, the effect wouldn't be the same. Two instruments can achieve a cleaner separation. And if you're playing a part like Guitar 2, you can leave notes ringing longer when you're not also keeping the bass going.



Ryan David Green and
Cameron Hood of Ryanhood

DONNA GREEN

2 CAPO UP

A capo is a great tool for spreading out the two instruments' voicings while still using open chord shapes. In **Example 2**, stay in open position for Guitar 1, playing an eighth note bass pulse with a syncopated chord hit on the “and” of beat 2. For Guitar 2, capo at the fifth fret, where the chord shapes become Em, G, D, and A. Since Guitar 1 is keeping time and covering the bass notes, Guitar 2 is free to create ascending lines across the top three strings. The two parts are completely distinct.

3 CREATE RHYTHMIC CONTRAST

As the last example suggests, you can build contrast in duet parts not only by shifting into different pitch ranges but by using different rhythms.

In **Example 3**, Guitar 1 (still in open position) is all staccato chords. Strum the bass-heavy chord voicings on beats 1, 2-and, and 4, with rests in between; instead of a regular D, use a D/F#, with a bass note on the sixth string, for a deeper sound, and mute all the chords quickly after strumming them. For Guitar 2, capo on the seventh fret, where the chord shapes (to sound in the key of A minor) are Dm, F, C, and G. Cross-pick the chords, using a flatpick or your fingers, for a flowing sound that makes a nice contrast with the percussive punch of Guitar 1.

The lower-pitched guitar part doesn't always have to be the main rhythmic engine. In **Example 4**, the two guitars swap roles from Ex. 3. Guitar 2 knocks out the chords up at the seventh fret, while Guitar 1 adds the ringing cross-picked arpeggios in open position.

4 MIX STRUMMING AND FINGERSTYLE

Another effective way to differentiate parts is having one guitarist use a flatpick while the other plays fingerstyle. That's the idea behind **Example 5**. Guitar 1 uses an open-position

fingerpicking pattern that may remind you of the opening of Crosby, Stills & Nash's “Helplessly Hoping.” Drop the tempo way down compared with previous examples—to around 60 bpm.

So what can a second guitar do over that fairly busy part? In Guitar 2, capo at the fifth fret again and play mostly sustained chords to add a harmonic overlay almost like a keyboard pad, with a touch of melodic movement too. This part thickens the overall sound without competing at all with the fingerpicking.

5 GO MELODIC

When one guitar is holding down the essentials of harmony and time, the second guitar can just go for melody alone, which is what happens in **Example 6**. Guitar 1 uses the same fingerpicking pattern as in **Example 5**, but this time Guitar 2 (sans capo) adds only an up-the-neck melody harmonized in sixths. Since the notes are not on adjacent strings, play either fingerstyle or hybrid style (with the pick on the third-string note and your ring finger picking the first string). The upper line is the melody, so if you want a simpler part just play the notes on the first string.

This kind of melodic line sounds sweet over the fingerpicking pattern, and the two parts are totally separated—in terms of pitch range, rhythm, and function.

As you work with these types of approaches to duet arranging, they'll become instinctive. You'll find yourself simplifying your part to leave space for the other player, or reaching for lines and patterns that fit with the song but aren't already stated. You're listening to each other and creating something that neither of you could do alone . . . and that's the power of two.

Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers, Acoustic Guitar's founding editor, is the author of the new lesson book/video Beyond Strumming. jeffreypepperrodders.com



Example 1

Guitar 1

Am C G D

Guitar 2

Example 2

Guitar 1

Am C G D

Guitar 2 (Capo V)

Em G D A

Example 3

Guitar 1

Am C G D/F#

Guitar 2 (Capo VII)

Dm F C G

Example 4

Guitar 1

Am C G D

Guitar 2 (Capo VII)

Dm F C G

Example 5

Guitar 1

Am C G D

Guitar 2 (Capo V)

Em G D A

Example 6

Guitar 1 plays bars 1-4 of Example 5

Guitar 2

Am C G D

THE NEXT LEVEL

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Pierre-Auguste Renoir's
"Young Spanish Woman
with a Guitar" (1898)





Spain and the Guitar

The modern classical
instrument and music itself
owe much to deep Iberian roots

BY MARK SMALL

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC.



The five-course Baroque guitar originated in Spain and gradually overtook the four-course instrument there in the 17th century.

"THE GUITAR PLAYER" BY JOHANNES VERMEER, 1672.

Guitar aficionados are generally aware that our beloved instrument traveled a very long and somewhat uncertain path to Spain. Many significant developments in classical guitar design and technique, and many important performers and composers, flourished in Spain during the past few centuries, but the story indeed began many years—perhaps millennia—earlier. Scholars, however, are not in agreement on where the instrument that ultimately became the modern classical guitar originated before arriving in Europe.

Among several scholarly speculations, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* includes one theory that the guitar descended anciently from the Greek *kithara*. Alexander Bellow's *Illustrated History of the Guitar* includes numerous photos of artifacts tying the guitar to various ancient cultures. One photo of a stone relief from the Hittite Empire (modern-day Turkey) dating from 1300 BCE depicts a musician playing a stringed instrument with a long neck and a body with curved sides that vaguely

resembles a guitar. Another theory is that the guitar is a distant cousin to the long-necked lutes of early Mesopotamia. Coptic lutes discovered in Egypt dating from 300–700 AD had flat backs and sides and superficially resemble the shape of a modern guitar body. Other historians posit theories that the pear-shaped oud found in pre-Islamic Arabian lands influenced the development of the lute, which appeared in Europe in the 15th century and is part of the guitar's lineage. Many parties throughout the centuries in several Western Europe countries contributed to the evolution of the modern guitar before Spain became a dominant force from the late 18th century forward in producing many groundbreaking, composers, performers, and luthiers.

GAINING AND LOSING STRINGS

Beyond the guitar's morphology, tunings and playing techniques must also be considered when tracing its genealogy. The *vihuela*, popular during the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy and Spain, fits directly into the evolutionary line

and came in three varieties. The *vihuela de penola* was played with a pick, while the *vihuela de arco* was played with a bow. The *vihuela de mano*, however, had five or six double courses of strings and was plucked with the fingers. One of the latter's tunings was G C F A D G (low strings to high). With the exception that the major third occurs between the fourth and third strings, its tuning relates to the interval pattern of a modern guitar and was pitched like a modern guitar with a capo placed on the third fret. (Of course on the modern guitar the major third occurs between the third and second strings and the whole is pitched a minor third lower than the *vihuela*.)

In the 16th century, small-bodied, four-course guitars made in France and Spain were used to play polyphonic music in a variety of tunings. Composers used different systems of tablature in France, Italy, and Spain to notate their music. Among the significant early composers were Alonso Mudarra (c. 1510–1580) from Spain, and Guillaume de Morlaye (c. 1510–1558) of France. Manuscript collections that

include works by unnamed composers from England and Italy survive in European libraries. Even though the evolution of the guitar moved forward, these relatively diminutive instruments continued to be played into the 19th century.

BAROQUE GUITAR

In *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, Harvey Turnbull writes that the five-course Baroque guitar originated in Spain and gradually overtook the four-course there in the 17th century. Its tuning is like that used today, with strings tuned (from lowest to highest) A D G B E. Composers of Baroque guitar music used at least four different arrangements of the octaves among the double strings. These included re-entrant tunings in which the strings were not pitched strictly from low to high. One or more of the doubled strings in the middle courses were pitched an octave higher. (Vestiges of re-entrant tuning are found in modern ukulele, five-string banjo, and 12-string guitar tunings.) In his collection of pieces titled *Poema Harmónico*, Francisco Guerau of Spain (1649–ca. 1722) utilized a tuning of the top three strings in unison and the bottom two strings in octaves. Baroque guitars were often used for song accompaniment, and the playing technique mixed strumming and notes plucked by the thumb and first two fingers. Many great instrumental solo works were created in this period. The music of Italian composer Francesco Corbetta (1615–1681) is less popular today than the works by his Spanish contemporaries Gaspar Sanz (1640–1710) or Santiago de Murcia (1673–1739), but Sanz hailed Corbetta in the day as “el mejor de todo” (the best of all).

Among the surviving instruments from this era, many are very elaborately inlaid with delicate, multilayered roses in the soundhole (made of parchment and other materials) and upward curving “mustache” figurations carved on either end of the bridge. Italian luthier Antonio Stradivari is famous for his extraordinary violins, violas, and cellos, but he also made some mandolins, harps, and an unknown number of Baroque guitars. Interestingly, his guitars have a plain look, exhibiting few of the flamboyant decorative features seen in Baroque guitars by other Italian makers. Among the five surviving Stradivari guitars, only one—the 1679 Sabionari—is still playable.

ADOPTING LASTING STANDARDS

The transition from the five courses of the Baroque guitar to six single strings of the small-bodied Romantic guitar occurred toward the end of the 18th century in either France or Italy. At this point, the guitar begins to have less in common with the lute and its other predecessors and significant features of the modern guitar

begin to emerge. A guitar with six single strings, a small body, and narrow waist became the standard in Spain in the early 19th century. The musical ramifications of the addition of the low E string included the possibility for part-writing on guitar. The extended range with the low E string allowed for playing the roots of I, IV, V chords on the lower strings with chord tones on the middle strings and melodic passages above.

Structural advances included machine heads replacing wooden tuning pegs, and fixed frets of ivory, ebony, and eventually metal, replacing tied gut frets. A flat back and a neck with the 12th fret located where the neck meets the body became standard. As well, fingerboards went from being flush with the guitar top to being raised about 2mm. Another structural feature was fan strutting, reputedly first used by luthier José Pagés (1740–1822), a leading member of the famed Cádiz school of guitar makers in Spain. Pagés began using three fan struts below the soundhole and later five. He is also credited with adding a slight dome to the guitar top. Celebrated Spanish composer/performers Fernando Sor (1778–1839) and Dionisio Aguado (1784–1849) both praised the quality of Pagés’ instruments. His innovations were influential on other

Romantic guitar makers such as Louis Panormo of London. Labels in Panormo’s guitars state that he made guitars “in the Spanish style.” French maker René François Lacôte was another noted builder of Romantic-era guitars.

Around the middle of the 18th century, tablature gave way to the adaptation of conventions of violin notation. Guitar scholar Thomas Heck writes that the movement away from tablature to standard notation began in Italy. From that point onward, music for the guitar has been notated on a single staff in the G (treble) clef with pitches sounding an octave lower than written. (Some 20th and 21st century composers, however, occasionally use two staves with G clefs to more clearly notate music with complex textures and rhythms.)

19TH CENTURY VIRTUOSI

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century brought rail transportation to Europe, increasing the opportunities for virtuoso performers to reach audiences across the continent. This reversed a declining interest in the guitar seen in the late 18th century. German virtuosi Simon Molitor (1766–1848) and Leonhard von Call (1767–1815) and Italian-born Mauro Giuliani



Baroque to Romantic era guitars (l-r): ca. 1830 Lacôte, ca. 1830 Panormo, 1813 Pagés, 1882 Fabricatore, Staufer (date unknown)

ST. CECILIA'S HALL COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

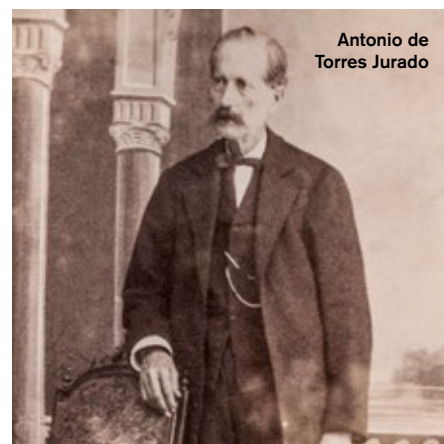
(1781–1829) made Vienna a musical hub for the guitar. The wave washed across Europe to Paris and London, as well as Russia, in the early and middle decades with the renown of Spanish-born Sor and Aguado; Italians Niccolò Paganini, Ferdinando Carulli, Matteo Carcassi, and Luigi Rinaldo Legnani; and Austro-Hungarian Johann Kaspar Mertz and Swiss-born Giulio Regondi. Each contributed a variety of works to the repertoire, and Sor, Aguado, Carulli, and Carcassi wrote notable guitar methods.

Also swept up in the new instrument's popularity were 19th century master composers Franz Schubert, Hector Berlioz, Camille Saint-Saëns, Charles Gounod, and Niels Gade, who played the guitar and wrote minor pieces for it. Opera composers Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner wrote guitar parts into their works *Il Trovatore* and *Enzio* respectively. Standing apart from their composer-performer peers, Sor and Giuliani are notable for their large-scale and technically dazzling solo guitar works—some in sonata form—as themes and variations, and for their prodigious catalogs. Sor also wrote in other genres including orchestral music, opera, ballet, string quartet, and more. Giuliani wrote three concertos for guitar and orchestra.

TOWARD MODERN GUITAR DESIGN

From the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, Spain increasingly became a very fertile ground for guitar activity, producing monumental performers, guitar builders, and composers. The innovations of luthier Antonio de Torres Jurado (1817–1892) added momentum. Even his name, Torres, testifies to his being a towering figure in Spanish guitar construction who set standards still in use today. Torres's guitar making falls into two epochs in his life. The first, spanning the years 1852–1869, began at the urging of noted guitarist Julian Arcas (1832–1882). Sadly, Torres struggled to earn a consistent income from guitar making throughout his life, and left building guitars in Seville in 1870 to open a china and crystal shop in Almería. Fortunately, he returned to guitar building in his second epoch from 1875 until his death in 1892.

Torres adopted the best practices of luthiers who preceded him and added his own ideas to lay the foundation for a much-revered modern school of Spanish guitar making. He increased the size of the guitar body to about 20 percent larger than guitars made by Pagés, Panormo, and Lacôte. His figure-eight-shaped



Antonio de
Torres Jurado

guitar body design added more area to both the upper and lower bouts and was reputed to have been inspired by a young woman he saw in Seville. Torres considered the soundboard the most important part of the instrument and made his tops thinner for increased resonance. He also used a bracing system that generally featured seven struts fanning out from below the soundhole supporting the top. Torres also settled on a 650 mm scale length for concert guitars, a dimension widely adopted by other luthiers and still a standard today. Additionally, Torres added a saddle to the bridge to facilitate string height adjustment.

Since 1600, Madrid has been a significant site for Spanish guitar making. The Ramirez guitar dynasty, the most famous throughout the 20th century, began in Madrid, where José Ramírez I (1858–1923) set up his shop in 1890 and where the company continues today. He largely adopted the methods of Torres, but developed the popular *tablao* guitar, a flamenco instrument with a larger body and narrower sides than Torres' guitars. Among many builders trained by José I was his brother Manuel Ramírez (1864–1916), best remembered for his 1912 encounter with the then-unknown Andrés Segovia, who came to his shop seeking to rent a concert guitar. Impressed after hearing him play, Manuel generously gave Segovia a concert guitar telling him, "Take it with you through the world and may your work make it fertile . . . Pay me for it without money."

Among Manuel's most famous apprentices were Santos Hernandez, Domingo Esteso, Enrique García, and Modesto Borreguero. The Ramírez family business passed in a direct line from José Ramírez I to José Ramírez II (1885–1957), José Ramírez III (1922–1995), and José Ramírez IV (1953–2000). Amalia Ramírez, also a highly skilled luthier and the sister of José IV, currently manages the Ramírez shop. Each member of the family has contributed to making their brand distinctive. José III



Francisco
Tárrega

increased the size of the sound box, introduced new varnishes, and was the first maker to use red cedar for a guitar soundboard. Beginning in 1937, Segovia played guitars made by German luthier Hermann Hauser, but in 1963 he began playing guitars by José III, alternating with an instrument built by Ignacio Fleta of Barcelona. In 1979, the Maestro began playing a model by José Ramírez IV. Among the many celebrated guitarists who embraced Ramírez guitars are Christopher Parkening, Kazuhito Yamashita, and Narciso Yepes. (As well, George Harrison played a Ramírez on the Beatles song “And I Love Her.”)

Notable 20th century luthiers working in Madrid tied to the Ramírez legacy are Marcelo Barbero, Manuel Contreras, Paulino Bernabé, and the Rodríguez family (Manuel Rodríguez Pérez Sr., Manuel Rodríguez II, and Norman Rodríguez).

INTO THE MODERN ERA

Guitarist and composer Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909), armed with the structurally and sonically improved instruments of Torres, ushered in the modern era of guitar. Though partially blind since childhood, Tárrega grew the guitar’s repertoire through his transcriptions of music by Beethoven, Bach, Chopin, Schumann, Haydn, his Spanish contemporary Isaac Albéniz, and others. His own compositions number around 80 and include such enduring classics as “Recuerdos de la Alhambra” and “Capricho Arabe,” in addition to etudes, preludes, and many short pieces in dance rhythms.

Tárrega contributed to the development of modern technique by endorsing the placement of the guitar on the left leg raised on a footstool and discontinuing the practice of resting the right-hand pinky finger on the soundboard. He also advocated the use of both free stroke and rest stroke for the right hand. Throughout the 19th century, there was debate over whether the guitar should be played with or without fingernails. Sor played with the flesh only and Aguado advocated for nails. In 1904, Tárrega cut his nails and promoted playing without them. Two of his famous students, Emilio Pujol (1886–1980) and Miguel Llobet (1878–1938), took different sides, with Pujol agreeing with Tárrega’s use of flesh and Llobet opting to use nails. The debate was effectively settled with the appearance of Segovia on the world stage, playing with nails and becoming renowned for his remarkable use of tone color.

Known as a Tárrega disciple, Llobet traveled as a concert artist throughout Europe and North and South America. His top students included Cuban virtuoso Rey de la Torre (1917–1994) and Argentine-born Maria Luisa

Anido (1907–1996). While Segovia (1893–1987) always declared himself to be self-taught, in his early years, he studied with Llobet, seeking to get closer to the pedagogical legacy of Tárrega. Llobet’s most famous contribution to the repertoire is *Canciones Populares Catalanes*, a collection Catalan folksong settings, which includes “El Noi de la Mare,” a piece widely popularized by Segovia. In the early decades of the 20th century, some concert promoters billed Llobet as “the world’s greatest guitarist.” Similar accolades would be subsequently bestowed upon Segovia.



THE DADDY OF US ALL

George Harrison is often quoted saying: “Segovia is the daddy of us all.” Indeed, the growth in the worldwide popularity of the Spanish guitar and guitar in general since the early decades of 20th century owes much to the life and work of Segovia. Harrison’s quote is interesting in that during the 1960s the Beatles spurred a huge surge in acoustic and electric guitar sales and inspired millions to play the instrument. Many baby boomers introduced to the guitar by the Beatles and other pop artists later pursued classical guitar studies. They ultimately discovered Segovia, sometimes through those who followed in his footsteps: Julian Bream and the Romeros, as well as Segovia students John Williams, Christopher Parkening, Oscar Ghiglia, Alirio Díaz, and later, Eliot Fisk, Sharon Isbin, and Virginia Luque. Segovia kicked off a movement that motivated four generations of classical guitarists.

To list Segovia’s numerous accomplishments is beyond the scope of this article. His *New York Times* obituary states that he set out to “redeem my guitar from the flamenco” and establish it as a respected instrument suitable for the classical concert stage, draw the public to the guitar, build the repertoire, and see the guitar placed alongside the violin and piano in conservatory and college and university music

departments worldwide. Put a check mark next to all items. During Segovia’s long career, he sold hundreds of thousands of concert tickets and millions of albums. At the time of his passing, in 1987, future concert bookings were on his calendar. As well, a look at music departments of the world’s most prestigious conservatories and universities indicates the embrace of the guitar in higher education.


But perhaps it was the expansion of the guitar’s repertoire backwards and forwards—through transcribing tremendously appealing works from the past and inspiring composers to write new ones—that enabled him to reach his other goals. Upon hearing Segovia’s arrangements of “Spanish Dance No. 5” by Granados, “Sevilla” or “Asturias” by Albéniz, J.S. Bach’s “Chaconne” or “Fugue in A Minor,” Domenico Scarlatti’s “Sonata in E Minor K. 11,” countless guitarists just *had* to learn them. His renditions of Sor’s op. 9 “Variations on a Theme by Mozart,” Tárrega’s “Recuerdos de la Alhambra” and “Capricho Arabe,” and many others elicited the same response. This dynamic expansion of the repertoire has been taken up by others and continues with vigor to this day.

Composers such as Mexico’s Manuel Ponce (1882–1948) enjoyed a long friendship and collaboration with Segovia that yielded five multi-movement sonatas, several themes and variations (including the epic *Variations and Fugue on ‘La Folia’*), and *Concierto del sur* for guitar and orchestra, among many other titles. Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959) dedicated his masterful *Douze Etudes* and *Guitar Concerto* to Segovia. While Segovia never had any connection to Joaquín Rodrigo’s famous *Concierto de Aranjuez* (the most popular concerto of the 20th century was premiered by Regino Sainz de la Maza), the revered Spanish composer dedicated his concerto *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre* and the solo work *Tres Piezas Españolas* to Segovia. Additional works dedicated to Segovia flowed from the pens of Federico Moreno Torroba, Alexandre Tansman, Joaquín Turina, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Francis Poulenc, and many others.

As Spain’s foremost classical guitarist, Segovia carried the Spanish guitar through seven decades of the 20th century and delivered it to the waiting hands of new generations. New champions now hold the torch and are preserving and expanding legacy of the Spanish guitar.

Mark Small is a music journalist, classical guitarist, and composer. He has recorded eight CDs featuring his arrangements and compositions ranging from solo works to orchestral pieces. marksmallguitar.com





A BRAVE NEW WORLD OF SPANISH GUITAR MUSIC

American classical guitarist Adam Levin has become an unlikely advocate for Spanish composers

BY BLAIR JACKSON

Composer Cristóbal Halffter looks on as Levin plays.



COURTESY OF ADAM LEVIN

Rightly or not, music played on nylon-string, or classical, guitar has frequently been dubbed “Spanish guitar.” It’s true that the modern acoustic guitar’s roots are in Spain (see Mark Small’s preceding article), and that the instrument’s most famous exponent, Andrés Segovia, was Spanish. And though classical guitar repertoire has come to encompass everything from Bach to the Beatles (along with avant-garde and virtually every other style imaginable), much of the most popular material was also written by Spanish composers in the late 19th to the middle of the 20th century, including Isaac Albéniz, Francisco Tárrega, Manuel de Falla, Joaquín Turina, Federico Moreno Torroba, Enrique Granados, and Joaquín Rodrigo. Even if their names are not instantly familiar to you, chances are you’ve heard pieces by them. Taken together their work helped define the Spanish nationalist style, with its nods to Iberian folk music, flamenco, and various other regional strains.

In part because classical guitar has become so eclectic and widely played during the past 50 years—more than ever it’s a truly worldwide phenomenon—Spain has not exerted as much influence on guitar repertoire as it once did. There are still many fine players emerging from Spanish conservatories, but not many contemporary Spanish composers have gotten much international exposure via the guitar in recent decades. During the last few years, however, an unlikely advocate for modern Spanish composers

has emerged: American classical guitarist Adam Levin has put out three volumes (with a fourth due in early 2019) of a remarkable series on the Naxos label called *21st Century Spanish Guitar*, consisting of 30 previously unrecorded pieces for solo guitar by Spanish composers spanning four generations, 29 of them commissioned by Levin, encompassing multiple genres.

‘The evolution of the traditional Spanish voice as it encompasses the guitar styles of the 21st century is striking...’

ADAM LEVIN

A native of Chicago, Levin has been among the top echelon of American classical guitarists for a while now, having studied with such renowned instructors as Eliot Fisk (at the New England Conservatory), Oscar Ghiglia (the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy), and Gabriel Estarellas (at the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid), toured internationally, released CDs, and been a teacher himself (currently at the University of Rhode Island and the University of Massachusetts). He credits Fisk (“my dear teacher, life coach, and friend”) for initially turning him on to three contemporary Spanish composers—Leonardo Balada, Cristóbal

Halffter, and Xavier Montsalvatge—but it was landing a much-coveted Fulbright scholarship in 2008 to go to Spain to study already-written contemporary Spanish music for guitar with Estarellas that set the wheels in motion for what became an obsessive quest to commission and then document the *new* modern works that found their way to *21st Century Spanish Guitar*—though it would be five years before the first volume would appear. “Estarellas was particularly generous with me,” Levin says, “often passing along personal emails and phone numbers of composers I would otherwise never have been able to contact. Meanwhile I spent a great deal of time listening to music, going to new music recitals, and querying composers for new referrals. Between iTunes bills and wining and dining Spanish composers, I wound up with enough willing candidates to fill my living room with sheet music.

“My selection criteria was really quite simple,” he continues. “Did I like their non-guitar music; followed by, did I like their guitar music? And for those that had not written for the guitar, was I confident that their compositional language would effectively translate to the guitar? With such a strong guitar imprinting in Spain, it is easy for composers to write run-of-the-mill Spanish music. The composers with whom I developed a special affection and affinity were those whose music was intrinsically ‘Spanish,’ but whose voice was distinct and unlike anything we have ever heard before. For

the most part, I think this is true of all the pieces in the collection. There were works that I rejected in the end because they struck me as clichéd, didn't follow a clear narrative, or were just plain weird, amorphous, or abstract to the point of being either or both unlistenable and/or unplayable as written on the guitar. It's never easy saying no to a composer, especially after there was a significant time and financial investment, but the project's mission of reimagining the landscape of Spanish guitar music in the 21st century took priority over all else; quality control was of the utmost importance."

Because they were new pieces, Levin had his work cut out for him just to be able to evaluate them for the project, much less get them under his fingers to the point where they could be recorded. As he notes, "It's one thing to just sit down and learn a familiar piece—one you've more or less grown up listening to. It's a whole other operation to receive a piece never before heard, analyze it for playability—several of these composers had written little or nothing for the guitar previously—make adjustments/ edits, add fingerings, get the hang of it roughly speaking, further edit and adjust, learn the final revision, play it for the composer, adjust the piece again to align with his or her interpretive vision, and finally take the stage and attempt to give a convincing performance."

The *21st Century Spanish Guitar* releases that have come out to date were produced and recorded/edited for Naxos by the husband-and-wife team of Norbert Kraft and Bonnie Silver at their preferred venue—St. John Chrysostom Church in Newmarket, Ontario—with Levin using three different classical guitars made by Massachusetts luthier Stephan Connor. "Volume One

They are colorful, versatile, and powerful, allowing me to achieve the towering *fortissimos* or, conversely, the subtle and delicate *pianissimos*.

"I'm a real sucker for guitars," he continues. "I'll talk to you all day about woods, bracing patterns, tuners, and the correlation between tonewoods and sound. And while Connor



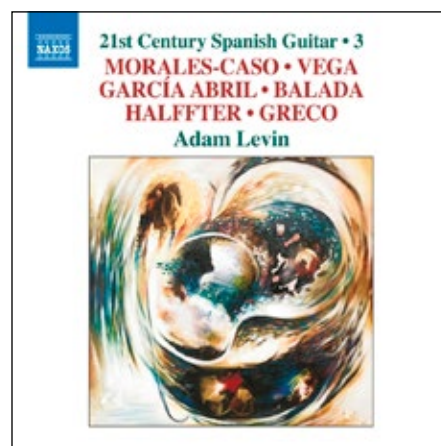
guitars were my go-to for these recordings and my current recitals, I don't shy away from modern guitars with a more traditional sound in mind. The traditional designs invented by Torres, perfected by the likes of Hauser, Ramirez, Bouchet, and Santos Hernandez, then improvised upon and refined by Friederich, Romanillos, Brune, Elliot, and Marin, to name but a few modern masters, are appealing to me in so many ways. Theirs are the voices I grew up with. Off stage I play guitars by each of them."

Not surprisingly, the series covers a very broad range of styles, though it leans heavily towards modern sonorities—which in the classical guitar world often translates as occasionally dissonant, rhythmically unpredictable, perhaps a bit dark in character, sometimes atonal. But there are also pieces that display a sort of neo-romanticism steeped in Spanish tradition but recast in more contemporary settings. For instance, Antón García Abril's "Trimountain," (from 2017's third volume) is redolent with wisps of Iberian flavor—traditional-sounding in parts, but still new. But then there are the Leonardo Balada "abstractions" (as he calls them) that appear on every release: each explicitly references famous works by Albéniz, Granados, and Falla, with Rodrigo's famous *Concierto de Aranjuez* slated for deconstruction on the fourth and final volume in the series—yet they feel far removed from those inspirations; unconventional in the extreme. As Levin notes, Balada has "his own very personal and distinct language."

But listeners who take the time to really dig into the series' wide-ranging and challenging

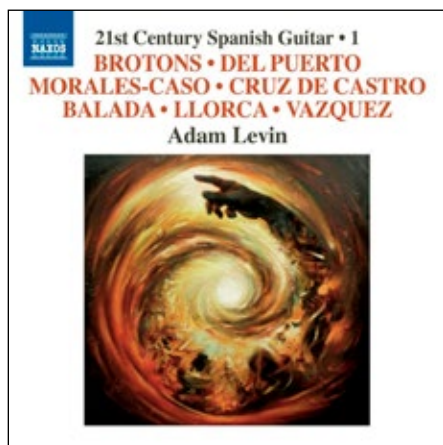
timbral palette and appreciate Levin's expressive virtuosity will discover a rich new world of Spanish guitar music, and encounter works by composers who merit further exploration, such as Eduardo Morales-Caso, Salvador Brotons, David del Puerto, Cristobal Halffter, Octavio Vazquez, Marc López Godoy, and others.

"The evolution of the traditional Spanish voice as it encompasses the guitar styles of the 21st century is striking, and that's what's on display in this four-part series," Levin says. "Spanish creativity, pre-Franco [the dictator who dominated and culturally isolated Spain for much of the 20th century], flourished when composers departed Spain to further their studies, exchanged ideas, and absorbed the rich European musical traditions and cul-



tures around them, which, in turn, encouraged them to cultivate music that had a distinct Spanish sound. This was, in many ways, a prototype for cultural globalization. It wasn't until 1975, when democracy was restored, that Spain could begin *la movida* [the movement] toward freely sharing ideas, paving the way for fresh musical expression.

"The Spanish tradition—the fusion of *aire flamenco*, Gypsy folk music, and *cante jondo*, with impressionism from neighboring France—remains potent in some of today's composers, but a majority of them have explored a variety of other musical languages, including serial, 12-tone, folk, neo-classic, Baroque, Romantic, jazz, pop, minimalist, avant-garde, electronic, and even crossover music. Spanish music remains loyal to traditions of the past while progressively blending new styles, traditions, themes, and genres from around the world. This series showcases the variety in new Spanish music, creates access points to new music for guitarists of all musical tastes, and establishes a body of serious and virtuosic new works, some of which will hopefully take their place in the standard repertoire." **AC**



was recorded on a cedar-and-Brazilian rosewood guitar," says Levin, "Volume Two on a spruce-and-Brazilian-rosewood guitar, and finally, Volume Three on a spruce-and-maple guitar. I've been performing on Connor guitars for 13 years.



Francisco Tárrega

Adelita and Lágrima

A gateway to the wonderful world of classical guitar

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Romantic-era Spanish composer Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909) is generally regarded as one of the fathers of classical guitar, and a study of his oeuvre is essential for any serious classical player. But Tárrega's work can be also be practiced by steel-string guitarists, as demonstrated by these two short and approachable pieces arranged by the iconoclastic classical and steel-string virtuoso Michael Chapdelaine.

Both "Adelita" and "Lágrima" have the sort of melody-and-accompaniment texture that is common to solo guitar literature of all genres. But the melodies should be played with *apoyando*, or rest strokes, as opposed to the free strokes that most steel-string fingerstylists use. In playing a rest stroke, your picking finger should come to

rest on the adjacent lower-pitched string as you complete the stroke. This will give the melody a firm, robust tone.

Chapdelaine advises not to simply play the melody louder than the accompaniment, but to play the melody how you feel it, both in terms of volume and expressiveness, while rendering the accompaniment part more quietly. "The difference of this approach is massive in connecting and communicating with the listener—and the universe," Chapdelaine says.

As for the fretting hand, follow the suggested fingerings throughout both pieces. Never use a barre unless otherwise indicated, as in bars 3, 10, 12, and 13 of "Adelita," for optimal tonal clarity. And, rather than sliding your fingers on the wound strings when you shift positions, lift

them off of the strings, perpendicular to the fretboard. That way, you'll avoid a "wretched squeak," as Chapdelaine puts it, referring to the transient sounds heard often in folk styles but considered poor form in classical playing.

Chapdelaine also recommends using your instrument's entire dynamic range—playing as loudly as you can without the guitar buzzing, and as quietly as is audible—to create a dramatic arch as the melody rises and falls within each piece. And, most important, he suggests being connected to the emotional content of the pieces. For instance, "*Lágrima* means tear-drop. You must look deep inside, play through your heart, find out what your tears feel like, and then play that feeling," he says. "Make someone cry." **AC**

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"Adelita"

Andante espressivo

CVII -----

To Coda ⊕ 1. 2.

CIV -----

CVII -----

1. 2. D.C. al Coda

⊕ Coda

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LÁGRIMA

MUSIC BY FRANCISCO TÁRREGA, ARRANGED BY MICHAEL CHAPDELAINE

“Lágrima”

Andante espressivo

let ring throughout

Fine

CVII

**D.C. al Fine (second time)
(no repeat)**

CLASSICAL LOVE STORY



No. 3 - 1888 Antonio De Torres

Matilde took her usual seat at The Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid. She sat front row to make sure he saw how much she loved his playing, he did not.

"Years later, In Paris, even though I knew Emilio was there, I had no desire to meet him. One afternoon however, I met him at a friend's house and ... nothing, we got married." - La Voz, 1-17-1929

Matilde Cuervas and Emilio Pujol were married until her death in 1954. They shared life, art, and this 1888 Torres for 31 years.

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HUGH O'CONNOR

Get Rhythm, Part 2

The second in a two-part lesson on beats, meters, and more

BY GRETCHEN MENN

In the first part of this series (AG August 2018), I covered some necessary terminology, introduced basic note values, and provided a number of musical examples, both for counting and for playing on the guitar. If you haven't already seen it, I suggest taking a moment to study it and work through the associated examples. Even if this is review for you, it's always a good idea to revisit the basics—not only to further solidify the foundation upon which all else is built, but to provide new insights as you examine something familiar with fresh eyes and skills.

DOTTED RHYTHMS

As you saw in Part 1, a dot next to a note adds half the note value to its length. So the duration of a dotted half note is a half note plus a quarter note. A dotted quarter note is a quarter plus an eighth note. A dotted eighth note is an eighth plus a 16th. As previously, you'll start by internalizing and counting the rhythms, then applying them to the guitar.

Example 1a depicts a dotted-quarter rhythm in 4/4: a quarter note plus eighth. (Remember

that while in staff notation, a time signature's two numbers are stacked vertically, in text they're expressed as fractions, for the sake of readability.) Tap the smallest subdivision of the beat—in this case, the eighth note—at a slow tempo with your right hand. Use a metronome if you'd like, but it's also fine to tap a slow, manageable tempo. Count out loud: *1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and*. With your left hand, tap the rhythm as indicated in italics. Be sure to look at the notated rhythm once you understand it—don't focus on the written words. They are there to get you started, but you'll want to get comfortable with notated music.

The positions of the eighth and dotted quarter notes are reversed in **Example 1b**. Here, tap *1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and*. In **Examples 1c–d**, the note values from the previous two figures are halved. For **Example 1c**, featuring the rhythm of a dotted eighth note followed by a 16th, tap the smallest subdivision of the beat—the 16th note—with your hand. Count aloud and tap *1-ee-and-ah, 2-ee-and-ah, 3-ee-and-ah, 4-ee-and-ah*. **Example 1d**, reverses the dotted eighth–16th rhythm: *1-ee-and-ah, 2-ee-and-ah, 3-ee-and-ah, 4-ee-and-ah*.

Once you're comfortable saying and tapping these rhythms, grab your guitar and play them, tapping your foot in quarter notes, but using the same verbal counting as when you tap the rhythms with your hands. Choose whatever chord or note you feel like. The idea is to pick something easy for your fretting hand so you can focus your attention on the rhythms.

TIED RHYTHMS

A tie—a curved line connecting two or more notes—creates a note value equal to the sum of the notes. Ties can join notes of any value, and in some cases ties function similarly to dots. For instance, Ex. 1b could be alternatively notated as shown in **Example 2a**. Though the two figures are rhythmically identical, Ex. 2a makes it easier to see each beat of the measure.

Example 2b shows a quarter note tied to the first 16th of the following beat. To negotiate this figure, tap the smallest subdivision with your right hand, while counting out loud and tapping with your left hand: *1-ee-and-ah, 2-ee-and-ah, 3-ee-and-ah, 4-ee-and-ah*. Work out **Example 2c**, which builds upon Ex. 2b, with



Example 1a

Count: 1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and

Example 1b

1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and

Example 1c

1 - ee-and-ah, 2 - ee-and-ah, 3 - ee-and-ah, 4 - ee-and-ah

Example 1d

1 - ee-and-ah, 2 - ee-and-ah, 3 - ee-and-ah, 4 - ee-and-ah

Example 2a

1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and

Example 2b

1 - ee - and - ah, 2 - ee - and - ah, 3 - ee - and - ah, 4 - ee - and - ah

Example 2c

1 - ee-and-ah, 2 - ee-and-ah, 3 - ee-and-ah, 4 - ee-and-ah

Example 2d

1 - ee-and-ah, 2 - ee-and-ah, 3 - ee-and-ah, 4 - ee-and-ah

Example 3a

1 - 2 - 3, 2 - 2 - 3, 3 - 2 - 3, 4 - 2 - 3

Example 3b

1 - 2 - 3, 2 - 2 - 3, 3 - 2 - 3, 4 - 2 - 3

Example 3c

1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3

Example 3d

1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3

Example 4a

1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3

Example 4b

1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3

Example 4c

1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 - 3

your left hand tapping 1-ee-and-ah, 2-ee-and-ah, 3-ee-and-ah, 4-ee-and-ah. A new rhythm—the dotted eighth, followed by a 16th tied to an eighth—is introduced in **Example 2d**. Count it like this: 1-ee-and-ah, 2-ee-and-ah, 3-ee-and-ah, 4-ee-and-ah. As with all examples, when you feel confident, transfer them to the guitar.

TRIPLETS AND TUPLETS

A tuplet is any rhythm that divides the beat into an equal number of subdivisions other than implied by the meter. The most common type of tuplet in simple meter is the triplet—three equal notes in the space normally occupied by two, indicated with a numeric 3 either above or below the group of notes, which are sometimes bracketed. Given the basic beat of a quarter note, as in 3/4 or 4/4 time, eighth-note triplets would mean three notes per beat, rather than the typical two. Similarly, 16th-note triplets are three per eighth note (or six per quarter).

Example 3a shows one measure of eighth-note triplets. First, try counting them. In this case, it will make it most comprehensible to

count and tap quarter notes with your right hand, and as follows with your left hand: 1-2-3, etc. For **Example 3b**, containing a triplet rhythm of a quarter note followed by an eighth note, tap quarter notes with your right hand, and in this pattern with your left hand: 1-2-3, etc.

Example 3c introduces 16th-note triplets. Tap in eighth notes with your right hand, and tap and count the triplets. Because of the high number of notes per beat, I find it's more practical just to count triplets, rather than triplets and beats of the measure, like this: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, etc. **Example 3d** shows how consecutive 16th-note triplets are more commonly expressed—as sextuplets, depicted with a numeric 6. Count these the same way as Ex. 3c.

Triplets are a good entry point to understanding and feeling compound meters, in which the beat consistently divides into three equal parts. In a compound meter, the note value representing one beat is a dotted note. As in simple meter, there are duple, triple, and quadruple compound meters: 6/8, 9/8, and 12/8, respectively. The top note designates the number of divisions of the beat in a measure,

while the bottom number indicates which note is the division duration. So in 6/8, 9/8, or 12/8, time, that is the dotted quarter note.

Example 4a shows one measure in 6/8, which I prefer to count as 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3. Try the same approach to understand **Example 4b**, which juxtaposes rhythmic values, as well as **Example 4c**. The same principles apply for counting and playing in 9/8, or 12/8—there would just be more beats in each measure.

I should mention that counting/tapping isn't a strict science, and there are multiple effective ways to do so. Some people prefer to count triplets as *tri-pul-let*; some count 6/8, as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Go with whatever approach makes sense and feels practical to you.

As with all the examples, study these concepts first, play them on the guitar, and then—I always have to mention this part, as I believe in it so strongly—put them to use by *writing* something new using them. Doing so ensures they become part of your musical vocabulary. You'll not only understand the theory better, but you'll be using it to broaden your creative palette. **AC**

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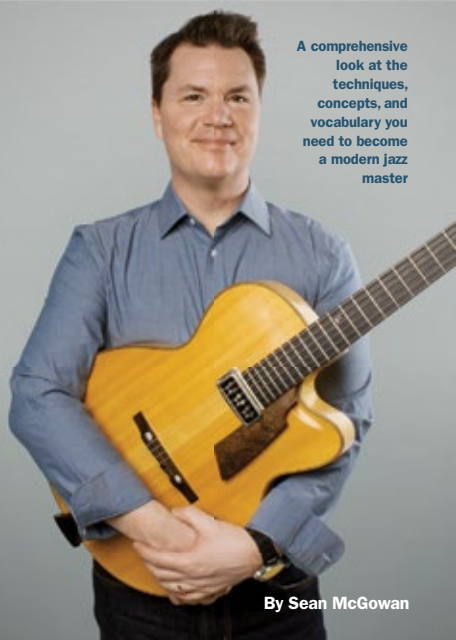
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Dill Pickle Rag

Tackling a formidable ragtime arrangement
by Eric Schoenberg

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

During the late 1800s, a new style of music—ragtime, some say named for its ragged rhythms—emerged in saloons in St. Louis. Composer-pianists like Scott Joplin, the “King of Ragtime” with his “Maple Leaf Rag,” wrote compositions that combined extensive syncopations with marching band–inspired themes.

Ragtime faded in popularity in the early 1900s, but blues musicians like Blind Blake and the Reverend Gary Davis would make their versions of piano rags on guitar. In 1971, the steel-string guitarist Eric Schoenberg and his cousin David Laibman recorded *The New Ragtime Guitar*, an album of arrangements that are remarkable in that they are essentially note-for-note transcriptions of original piano rags transferred to the guitar, rather than modified to suit the six-string.

Among the duets on *The New Ragtime Guitar* is the classic “Dill Pickle Rag,” originally composed by Charles L. Johnson. On that recording, Schoenberg flatpicks the melody, while Laibman fingerpicks it in harmony, adding a bass line and inner voices. For the 1973 compilation *Contemporary Ragtime Guitar*, Schoenberg recorded the tune as a solo arrangement, transcribed here in its entirety. Be warned that it’s not an easy piece. Schoenberg, who for many years has owned his namesake guitar shop in Tiburon, California, and who is known for the prewar-inspired guitars also bearing his name, said via email, “I can’t believe I played it that fast. Ah, youth.”

PICK YOUR APPROACH

This transcription captures the way Schoenberg played “Dill Pickle Rag” on the original recording, also taking into account how his interpretation has evolved over the last 40-something years. The picking hand’s role is pretty straightforward. You can play the arrangement fingerstyle, with a thumbpick and fingers, or with a thumbpick and fingerpicks. Pick the up-stemmed notes with your index, middle, and ring fingers, and the down-stemmed notes with your thumb.

If you’d like, palm mute the bass notes—remember, rest your picking hand lightly on the



strings, so that the sound is slightly muffled but the pitch is still clear. This will provide a nice textural contrast with the melody and will help highlight the arrangement’s contrapuntal nature (having independent lines, in this case a bass part and melody).

MIND THE FINGERINGS

The fretting hand’s role in “Dill Pickle Rag” is less straightforward. On the original recording, Schoenberg plays the piece with apparent ease and joyfulness, at the knuckle-busting tempo of around 190 quarter notes per minute. This is quite a mean feat when you consider the unorthodox fingerings he was using to imitate the piano.

To even begin to approach Schoenberg’s tempo, it’s critical to use considered fingerings. Bars 1–4 are straightforward enough: Stop the low G (string 6, fret 3) with your second finger and the F (string 4, fret 3) with your third finger. Keep this shape held throughout these four measures, hammer-on the second-fret A with your first finger, etc.

Things get tricky in bars 5 and 6, where Schoenberg plays the melody on consecutive adjacent strings for a pianistic effect. It’s best to learn this phrase at a microscopically slow pace, paying close attention to the discrete moves that make an effective whole. Here are some picking-hand suggestions: throughout the measures, keep your second finger anchored on the 10th-fret C, your fourth-finger on the 12th-fret G, and your third finger on the 10th-fret A.

On beats 1–2 of measure 5, barre the eighth fret across all six strings with your first finger. Then, on beat 3, quickly grab the seventh-fret B with your first finger, before sliding that finger back into the eighth-fret barre. On beat 1 of

‘Dill Pickle Rag’ is essentially a note-for-note transcription of the original piano rag transferred to the guitar.

measure 6, angle your first finger upward, such that it’s still stopping the eighth-fret C but not blocking the open A string. End the phrase with your first finger on fret 7, then 8 and 9 of string 6.

It’s just as important to consider fingering nuances during transitions between phrases. On beat 4 of measure 6, for instance, end a phrase in ninth position, with your fourth finger on string 3 and your first on 6. Keep finger 4 on that string as you quickly slide down into a D7 shape—your third finger on string 5, second on 4, fourth on 3, and first on 2—on the downbeat of measure 7. Make sure not to lag behind the beat as you change positions between bars 6 and 7; use a metronome for assurance if needed.

Work out the other fingerings in “Dill Pickle Rag” in the same way—look for ways to move between notes and chord grips with as little movement as possible. Tackle the piece phrase by phrase, then section by section, spending the most time with the parts that require unfamiliar fretting-hand moves, like those wild bars 5–6.

Once you’ve got it all together, play along with the original recording and try to copy Schoenberg’s smooth rhythmic bounce and lively phrasing. I’d recommend playing the original recording through software that allows you to slow the audio down without affecting its pitch. Keep the tempo comfortable and increase it gradually until you can match Schoenberg’s speed—and good luck with that!

In any case, a key lesson to take away from Schoenberg’s arrangement of “Dill Pickle Rag”—one that applies to any type of music—is that it pays to push your fretting fingers into new formations, shapes that might feel awkward at first but which will broaden your range of expression and your repertoire. **AC**

Intro Fast Ragtime

* G7

* Chord symbols reflect basic harmony.

A

C

D9

** Note is tied into on repeats.

To Coda 2 ⊕

G7

1.

C

G

2.

To Coda 1 ⊕

C

G7

B

G7

C

*** Schoenberg now substitutes the cue-sized notes in bar 13.

Cont. from p. 53

17

G7/B C G7 C

10 8 10 8 10 8 10 8 1 2 3 0 10 8 10 8

10 10 10 9 9 9 10 0 3 2 2 0 9 9 9 10

7 7 8 8 3 2 8 8

1. D G7 2. G7/B C *D.S. al Coda 1 (take repeat)*

21

2 0 0 2 3 2 1 8 8 8 9 12

0 3 2 0 3 0 0 0 10 10 10 9 9 10

3 3 3 7 8

⊕ Coda 1

C F

25

1 1 1 1 3 0 1 3 1 2 1 2 3 7

0 0 0 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 0 7

3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 0 7

*Schoenberg now prefers
the sixth-fret B \flat here.

C7 F 1.

28

10 8 10 8 1 1 3 0 1 3 1 2 1 2 3

10 8 10 8 3 2 0 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

8 8 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2

2. C Dm

G7 C

32

0 3 3 0 3 3 1 1 3 3 1 2 3 3

3 3 0 2 3 4 0 0 1 2 0 2 3 0

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

40

1. C7 F

2. G7 C C7 C C7

3 1 3 2 3 3 2 3 1 1 3 0 3 0 0 3 1 3 2 3

2 3 3 2 3 2 2 3 3 3 0 3 0 3 3 2 3

3 3 1 1 3 0 2 3 3 3

44

C F C7 1. F

2. *D.S. al Coda 2*
(take repeat)

48

49

Coda 2

G7 C G7 C

***Play 11th-fret F# to match original recording**

52 **E^bdim7** **Cdim7** **A^bdim7** **G^bdim7** **G7** **C**

8 5 7 8 5 4 2 4 5 2 4 1 2 4 0 1 2 3 0 1 3 3 8

Right-Hand Men

Diversify your fingerstyle approach through studies by Giuliani, Carcassi, and Sor

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Steel-string guitarists tend to rely on a relatively narrow range of picking patterns—more than a few players have based their entire careers on Travis picking—while the repertoire for classical guitar makes use of a more varied assortment of approaches. A sampling of etudes by Mauro Giuliani, Matteo Carcassi, and Fernando Sor reveals a trove of picking-hand templates, some of which might not have occurred to you as a steel-string guitarist.

In this lesson, you'll play through some of these picking patterns. It would be beneficial to borrow some basic approaches from classical guitar, as suggested by the Los Angeles-area virtuoso Juanito Pascual, when working on these examples. To ensure that your picking hand is optimally positioned, rather than angling it as some steel-string players do, try this: Hold the arm of your picking hand straight forward in the air, make a fist, and let your fingers gently fall out. Then, while maintaining your picking hand's position relative to the forearm, place the hand in front of the guitar near the strings. This will ensure the most neutral position for your tendons, allowing you to pick with the least amount of tension.

Unintentional notes are not uncommon—and even an attractive feature—in blues and folk settings. But in classical playing, there is a premium on cleanliness and accuracy. To avoid inadvertently sounding a string after you articulate a note, instead of bringing your thumb or finger straight back (which can easily cause an accidental collision with the string you just picked), lift it slightly. Done correctly, this will create a sort of circular finger motion when you repeatedly pick a note on the same string.

Beginners' Tip #1

Picking-hand technique can be a highly personal thing; experiment with various ratios of nail to flesh, to find what works best for you.



Flamenco master
Juanito Pascual

WEEK ONE

This week you'll work through some exercises by the Italian musician Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829), who in his day was regarded as the ultimate guitar virtuoso. (For a full lesson on Giuliani's etudes, see the November 2010 issue of AG.) In Giuliani's *120 Right-Hand Studies, Op. 1a*, a simple I–V (C–G7) harmonic progression is treated to a series of increasingly complex picking-hand patterns.

In **Example 1**, which depicts “Study No. 1,” an active bass line on strings 5–3 supports static dyads (two-note groupings) on strings 1 and 2. To play this figure—and the others for this week—fret and hold a basic open C chord for the duration of bars 1 and 3, and a G7 chord with a B in the bass (second finger on string 5 and fourth and first fingers on strings 2 and 1, respectively) in bar 2. Pick the down-stemmed notes with your thumb and the up-stemmed notes with your index finger on string 2 and your middle on string 1; strum the C chord in bar 3 with your thumb.

Work through the example at whatever tempo you can cleanly play the music without slowing down when you switch between chords, and repeat bars 1–2 as many times as you'd like. Once you've got the figure under your fingers, switch things up by picking strings 1 and 2 with your ring and middle fingers. You can also try the exercise using different chords.

“Study No. 76” (**Example 2**) is a bit more demanding of the picking hand. In a typical steel-string picking pattern, the thumb is assigned to strings 6–4. But here, the thumb picks an eighth-note bass line, assisted by the index finger on beats 2 and 4, while the

middle and ring fingers pick dyads in an eighth-eighth-quarter rhythm. If needed, learn the up-stemmed and down-stemmed notes separately before combining them.

In **Example 3**, “Study No. 81,” you'll pick a bass note with your thumb, squarely on each beat, adding a 16th-note pattern with your index and middle fingers on the upper two strings. Play this one as evenly as possible. Once you've mastered it, try picking strings 1 and 2 with your middle and ring fingers, just like you did with Ex. 1.

Bring week one to a close with “Study No. 93” (**Example 4**), which reverses the direction of the picking pattern, now going from highest note to lowest on each beat—a direction that will feel less natural for many guitarists. This example incorporates the sixth string, requiring different fretting-hand fingerings. For the C-chord measures, stop the sixth-string G with your third finger and the fifth-fret C with your fourth finger; for G7, use the same grip as in the previous figures, adding your third finger to the sixth-string G. Don't feel discouraged if at first you need to play Ex. 4 considerably slower than the others from this week.

WEEK TWO

The source materials for this week's workout are two excerpts by Matteo Carcassi (1792–1853), from the Italian virtuoso guitarist's *25 Etudes, Op. 60*. **Example 5** shows a portion of “No. 1,” a scalar study in the key of C major. In this figure, the thumb picks bass notes, and a single-note line is articulated by the index and middle fingers, picking in alternation. Key to playing this is getting your fingers in at the right place and at the right time, and that goes for both hands. For

instance, start bar 1 by simultaneously fretting the Cs on strings 5 and 2, and remove your first finger to play the open B on beat 2. Keep in mind that “No. 1” is meant to be played Allegro, or relatively fast at around 120–156 bpm, so gradually work up to that tempo.

Beginners' Tip #2

Proper nail care is of obvious importance to the pick hand. Always keep your nails well shaped, following your fingertips' natural contours. (For more on the care and feeding of the picking hand, see Mac Randall's feature in the June 2018 issue of AG.)

Also in the key of C, “No. 6” (Example 6) ups the ante by moving the scalar aspect to the lower strings and adding a half-note melody on strings 1 and 2. Your thumb has to kind of hustle as it picks all of the bass notes throughout, while the other fingers have much less to do. Try picking the up-stemmed notes on string 1 with your ring finger and those on string 2 with your middle and index fingers. And though it's important to play “No. 6” evenly, try to do so not mechanically but expressively.

WEEK THREE

Another giant in the world of classical guitar, the Spanish instrumentalist and composer Fernando Sor (1778–1839) was quite the prolific writer. Sor's *Twenty Studies for the Guitar* is generally regarded as among the most beautiful collec-

tion of etudes in the classical guitar literature and can serve as a great workout on the steel-string guitar.

This week, you'll focus on a big chunk of “Estudio 2” from *Twenty Studies* (Example 7). As with all the previous examples, it's in the key of C and in the first position, selected for the simplicity

Beginners' Tip #3

Guitarists can be unaware of the unintentional notes they produce when fingerpicking. Record yourself playing these exercises, and listen carefully, to make sure that you're playing everything with precision.

Example 6 cont.

WEEK 3

Example 7

When you work on Ex. 7, strive for an

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Tremolo picking—in which a note or notes is rapidly repeated—is one of the most formidable right-hand techniques to master on the guitar. Start working on your tremolo using Mauro Giuliani's "Study No. 81," shown here in notation. Practice it as written, *p-i-m-i* on each

beat, and *p-a-m-a* and *p-a-m-i*, as well. Keep your *a*, *m*, and *i* fingers in perfect line in front of string 1. Work on the example at a variety of speeds, using a small range of motion, and strive to play the 16th notes with great evenness.

Treble Clef: *p i m i*
 Bass Clef: 0-0-0 0-0-0 0-0-0 0-0-0 1-1-1 1-1-1 1-1-1 1-1-1



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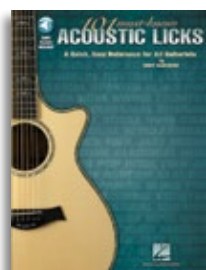
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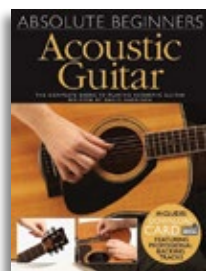
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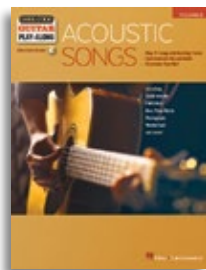


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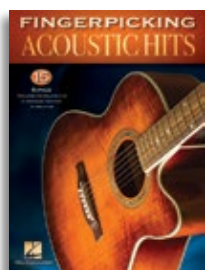


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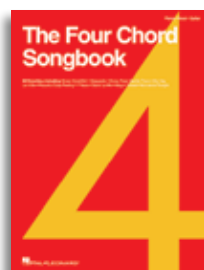


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READERS' PICK

Little Martha

An unplugged Southern rock classic

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

In the early 1970s, the electric guitarists Duane Allman and Dickie Betts helped define the sound of Southern rock with their twin harmonized leads in the Allman Brothers Band. But on Allman's composition "Little Martha," the guitar tandem applied its trademark harmonies in a fingerpicked acoustic setting.

The piece was originally recorded as a trio, with Berry Oakley on the electric bass, just weeks before Allman's untimely death in a motorcycle accident in 1971. But on the Allman Brothers' 1972 album, *Eat a Peach*—the version that most listeners know—the bass part was eliminated. (The restored bass part can be heard on the four-disc box set *Dreams*.)

"Little Martha" serves not only as a primer

on open-E tuning, but a study of harmonization in a duo setting. To get into open E from standard, raise string 3 a half step and strings 4 and 5 a whole step each. Alternatively, for less tension on the guitar, you could tune to open D, as its intervallic structure is the same as open E. Lower strings 1, 2, and 6 by a whole step and string 3 by a half step, and use a second-fret capo to sound in the original key of E major.

As they often did with single-note electric leads, Allman and Betts loosely played the same parts on "Little Martha," but harmonized largely in thirds and fourths. Note that if you'd like to play the piece solo, you could just learn Guitar 1's part (which, incidentally, Allman recorded on a National resonator)

from beginning to end. Alternatively, much of the piece is playable on one guitar. Take the main theme, which starts in bar 5, for instance. When you learn the higher guitar part, just add the 16th-note pairs the lower guitar plays on beats 1 and 4 to create a composite arrangement.

Whether you work up "Little Martha" as a solo or duo piece, it's critical to get the right time-feel happening. The best way to do this is to internalize the rhythms. You might start by isolating measures 5 and 6, practicing this key phrase at a slow tempo, using just open strings before playing the bars as written. Play along with the original recording to capture the sunny bounce of this Southern rock classic. **AC**



Duane Allman



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LITTLE MARTHA

BY DUANE ALLMAN

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Freely

Guitar 1

E

B5

B7/E

B

add9

let ring throughout

§ Moderately

Guitar 1

E

Guitar 2

let ring throughout

A

E

To Coda

Musical notation for measures 10-12. The system includes a treble staff, a bass staff with a 7-string guitar extension, and a second treble staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). Measure 10 starts with a treble staff entry marked '10'. The bass staff contains fret numbers (0-7) and a 7-string extension (8-10). The second treble staff continues the melody.

Musical notation for measures 13-15. The system includes a treble staff, a bass staff with a 7-string guitar extension, and a second treble staff. The key signature is three sharps. Measure 13 starts with a treble staff entry marked '13'. Above the first treble staff, chords are indicated: C#m, A, B, C#m, A, B9, C#m, A, B. A first ending bracket labeled '1.' spans measures 14 and 15. The bass staff contains fret numbers and a 7-string extension. The second treble staff continues the melody.

Musical notation for measures 16-18. The system includes a treble staff, a bass staff with a 7-string guitar extension, and a second treble staff. The key signature is three sharps. Measure 16 starts with a treble staff entry marked '16'. Above the first treble staff, chords are indicated: E, C#m, A, B, E. A second ending bracket labeled '2.' spans measures 17 and 18. The bass staff contains fret numbers and a 7-string extension. The second treble staff continues the melody. A 'Harm.' (harmonic) instruction is present in measure 18.



19

B A/B B A/B

21

B A/B

1. F#m A B C#m A B9

2. E D.S. al Coda

24

⦿ Coda

E B E B E

25

Harm. -----



Todd Cambio

MAKERS & SHAKERS

COURTESY OF FRAULINI GUITARS

Todd Cambio of Fraulini Guitars

Digging for inspiration in the overlooked guitars of the past

BY E.E. BRADMAN

“My brother and I were in a record store looking through the bargain bin, and there was a copy of Cream’s *Disraeli Gears*, and right next to it, Muddy Waters’ *Hard Again*,” Todd Cambio says. “At the time, I was 14 and trying to play harmonica. I really wanted to buy *Disraeli Gears*, but my brother told me to get *Hard Again* because Muddy always had the best harmonica players. I thought he was trying to talk me into it because he didn’t have any money, but I reluctantly bought it. When we got home, I put it on, thinking I’d get it out of the way. I knew I was never going to listen to it again.” He was in for a shock. “The first song was ‘Mannish Boy,’ and the hair raised on my head. I was bitten. After that, that was all I listened to.”

Cambio’s passion for blues, rags, and old-time music is no surprise to anyone who’s ever seen the exquisite hand-built instruments he

makes under the Fraulini Guitar Company banner in his Madison, Wisconsin shop. The Chicago native specializes in building instruments like those used by such early guitar heroes as Lead Belly and Eddie Lang, and he’s an especially popular builder for contemporary players—such as Ben Harper, Mary Flower, Todd Albright, Craig Ventresco, and Jake Sanders—who favor old-style guitars. He’s also renowned for his meticulous recreations of instruments played by early 20th-century recording guitarists Lydia Mendoza and Lonnie Johnson, who both used 12-strings made by Guadalupe Acosta of the San Antonio, Texas-based Acosta Music Company.

Cambio may have been born in the Windy City, but his country roots are real. His family moved to a farm in Wisconsin when he was a year-and-a-half old, and after years of regularly visiting relatives in Chicago—including a

teenage stint as a harmonica player on the South Side, where he sat in with players who’d known Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf—Cambio moved to Madison, Wisconsin, for college. There, he busked on guitar, playing “lots of Robert Johnson/Blind Boy Fuller kinda stuff.”

Eventually, his passion for older-style blues led him to contemporary players like Paul Geremia and Alvin Youngblood Hart, who would point him in a new direction. “Before I met Alvin, I didn’t really think about the guitar I was playing,” Cambio says. “He was playing all these old, inexpensive guitars—he had a couple Stellas, and that started to register with me. One day, I asked [Hart’s ex-wife] Heidi Loetscher-Hart if she would fix a guitar for me, and she said, ‘Well, you’re a carpenter and woodworker—you can fix it.’ A lot of things in life are like that . . . you think you can’t do something, and somebody tells you, ‘Yeah, you can!’”

Once you decided to build guitars, did you consider luthier school?

I didn't, because I wanted to learn the old ways. I had worked very briefly with a violin repairman in my early 20s, and he impressed upon me the importance of hide glue and varnish. I knew that if I went to a school, they weren't going to teach me things like that, and bolt-on necks had no appeal to me. I wanted to learn how to make guitars like the ones I was repairing and rebuilding, which weren't held in any sort of regard in the guitar world.

What makes you say that?

Acoustic guitar makers are always embracing advances in technology—looking for the new wood, moving on to different state-of-the-art finishes and adhesives—and the only thing people go back to in the acoustic guitar world are early Martins and Gibsons.

Why?

I don't know. They're wonderful instruments and there are lots of people out there building great stuff, but I'm interested in old music, old instruments, and stuff that guitar historians have mostly overlooked.

You've been instrumental in spotlighting the Acosta family of luthiers.

Those cats were so amazing, and the fact that they're overlooked is a shame. On my website, I have a picture of an Acosta double-neck that's electric, with two DeArmond pickups, pickup switches, and volume knobs. And it's from 1947—ten years before Gibson made a double-neck 6/12-string. They were far out!

How did Lonnie Johnson get an Acosta?

Lonnie was a talent scout for record labels. He would go into a town, look for blues or jazz players, bring them in to record, and then cut a few sides himself at the session. He was in San Antonio for a while, and presumably he ordered that guitar and then took it to New York, where he recorded these seminal duets with Eddie Lang. Here's an African American playing a guitar made by these Mexican guys and doing a record with an Italian dude. That's America. Totally beautiful, man! And then he played that same guitar with Duke Ellington and with Louis Armstrong on a 1929 record called "Mahogany Hall Stomp." That is an iconic American guitar.

You're an expert on Italian-American luthiers, too.

Oscar Schmidt, the company that made the early Stellas, was in Jersey City, New Jersey, and a lot of Italian craftspeople worked there. There were

also many independent Italian luthiers, including the guys that preceded John D'Angelico, and who he learned from. That style went out of fashion in the '20s and '30s. I began digging into their history, collecting and restoring their instruments and getting in touch with their families.

Where'd the name Fraulini come from?

It was my dad's mother's maiden name. My family came here from central Italy and worked as coal miners in Missouri in the early 1900s. They were great mechanics, carpenters, and stonemasons; the women did all kinds of artwork, including crocheting, beadwork, and needlework, and they made all kinds of tiny pastas and stuff. That's where I got my craftsmanship. I got my love for music and people—and just life, in general—from my mother's side.

Tell us about the various Fraulini models.

The Seven Sisters, which are named after my grandmother and her six sisters, are straight copies of the seven guitars that really influenced me. The Ultra Modern line is inspired by old Martins and Gibsons. I also build ethnic instruments like the *lira calabrese*, a three-string bowed instrument played throughout the Mediterranean and Adriatic.

What inspired the Decalomania line?

Restoring a decal Stella 12-string. They were made out of poplar, which is a simple, humble wood most people don't have much regard for. Put a colored varnish and a decal on it, though, and suddenly it's appealing.



You're a proponent of domestic woods like white oak, too.

People are hip to eating locally and all that groovy stuff, but when it comes to guitars, most of us don't think twice about getting wood from clear-cut forests in Madagascar or Central and South America; the CITES restrictions are



COURTESY OF FRAULINI GUITARS

a good reason to explore alternatives. On these old guitars, they used all kinds of domestic stuff, including white oak or birch, but those aren't often options for many luthiers.

Why not?

Partially because it requires a paradigm shift for the buyers. We're barely scraping by as luthiers, so to satisfy the market, it's easy to fall into the trap of using woods that are getting harder and harder to get because we've overharvested them.

How did you get into using white oak?

The first guitars I made were from the woods I saw on the old instruments I was working on. In the early 1900s, white oak was fashionable for furniture, and it was plentiful. It's a beautiful wood, and it sounds great. I was just trying to recreate what the old luthiers did, but it's hard to convince people that white oak is a good wood, even though it looks and sounds good. The acoustic guitar market can be conservative.

What do you like about these old, ladder-braced instruments made of poplar, birch, and white oak?

They have a particular sound. It's not "pretty," but if you're trying to play old-time stuff, it's the sound you want.

You're a fan of ladder-bracing?

People think X-bracing is more structurally solid, and in a way, it is, but it makes for a different sound. The thing is if I have a 100-year-old parlor guitar that's ladder-braced, it's not going to have been worked on, because it wasn't perceived as worth working on. Most of the time, when I see issues on an old, ladder-braced guitar, it's not because of the bracing. It's because it's been cooked in a hot attic or stored in a basement with lots of humidity. A Martin or Gibson would have that problem, too.

I get the impression you're not crazy about archtops.

I'm a fingerpicker, and archtops aren't made for fingerpicking. They're made to carry the rhythm over a large band; they don't have the overtones or warmth that I enjoy in a guitar. As a woodworker, building an archtop is a great challenge, and although it appeals to that part of me, I'm more interested in flattops.

How close do you stay to the originals that inspire you?

If I'm making a copy, I try to stay as close as possible. If I see failures in the original, I'll

make changes. Most of the time, I put in adjustable truss rods because most people want them, and I put a radius on my fingerboards so that they don't become concave. On some old guitars, the necks are baseball bats, and few people today want necks that chunky.

Are you interested in updating the original designs?

I went through a time when I made "improvements," and I found that a lot of them weren't. As I progress, I get closer to what the old stuff was. But there's so much inconsistency in the

old stuff that you can usually find something that fits with what you're doing.

How do you distinguish your own designs from your inspirations?

When you're doing something traditional—and this applies to playing music and making guitars—you can try to do rote copies, but at a certain point, you have to say, "OK, now it's going to be me." You do your own thing, with the old instruments pushing and encouraging you on.

Which Fraulini instruments best represent your original ideas?

The Fancy Italian series and the Silvio.

What are some ways you keep learning?

I try to do a round of repairs once a year to keep my mind right, and I always go back to the instruments I have and pull ideas off them. And I've learned a lot from people passing through the shop—some of the best tricks I've learned were from people saying, "Somebody that I know does this."

Has feedback from players shaped your perspective, too?

Absolutely. I've learned a lot from Alvin, and Paul Geremia was a huge influence on what I do. When I made a guitar for him, he said, "Make it as lightly as you dare." It was a really wonderful instrument, and every time he came through town on tour, I got to see what it was doing and how it was responding to life on the road. He and I talked a lot about what makes a good guitar.

'If I'm making a copy, I try to stay as close as possible. If I see failures in the original, I'll make changes.'

What inspires you most?

I'm a lifelong musician, but I don't really care for the hustle of playing music for a living. Building guitars allows me to keep a foot in that world, and this is the best way I can serve my community of fellow musicians. I want to provide instruments for my friends and for people who play traditional music. I feel so incredibly fortunate to do what I do.

When will you write a book about all the research you've done?

I've done a lot of digging—it's the coal miner in me (*laughs*). I've got a lot of things going, but a book is on the list. Making guitar tuners is also on the list. There are a few things I want to get to before I expire.

AC



Cambio's recreation of Lonnie Johnson's Acosta 12-string.

GREG BRANDT

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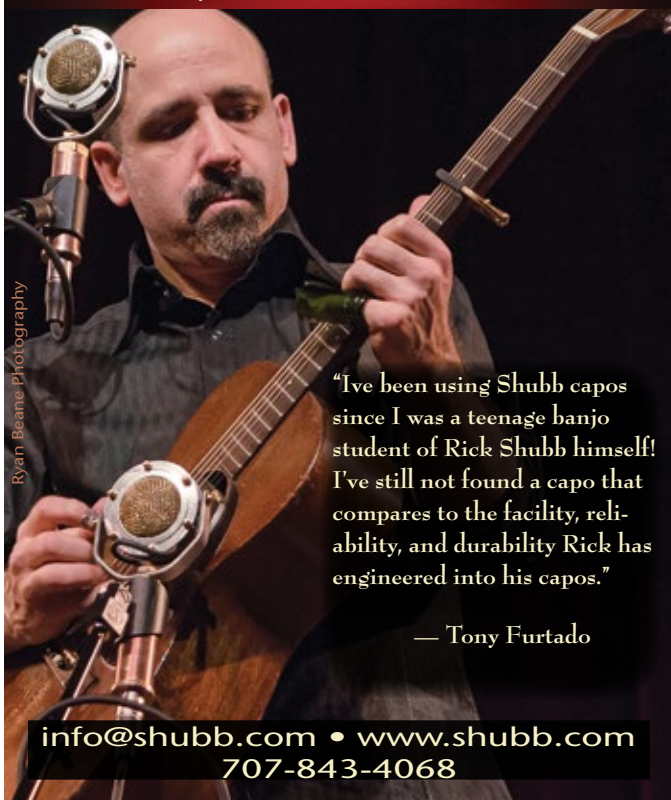
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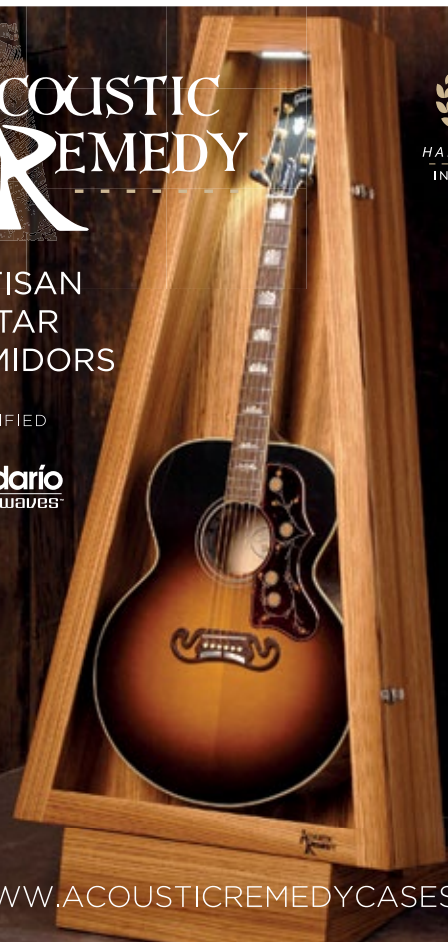
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Why Does My New Guitar Need a Setup?

Here's why a brand-new instrument may need some attention

BY MAMIE MINCH

Q: I recently ordered a brand-new acoustic guitar from a well-known, reputable online company. I was frustrated to find that when I unpacked it, right out of the box, the guitar wasn't comfortable to play; not in first position or up the neck! I took it to my local shop, and they told me it needed a setup. It played much better when they were done with it. The guitar isn't top of the line, but it sure isn't a cheap guitar, and it's totally new. Why would it arrive in the mail already needing work?

—Jim Carver, Minneapolis, MN

A: This is an issue that I hear a lot about from my own clients, and I can understand how frustrating it must feel to lust after a certain guitar, order your very own, wait for it, and look forward to playing it—only to find that it's not set up for optimum ease and playability when it shows up at your door. Didn't you choose wisely and pay for a quality instrument? Isn't this a good guitar company? Well, of course, you did, and it likely is. Still, many—even most—guitars arrive from the manufacturer needing additional setup work.

There are a few things to consider when thinking about a setup. Understandably, different players have different expectations and needs when it comes to their guitars. Whether you play with a pick, use your fingers, do lots of single-string leads, use a slide, etc., these factors affect what kind of action will feel good and work for you. So the ideal setup is not the same for everyone. A few subtle things



Many new guitars arrive from the manufacturer needing additional setup work.

COURTESY OF MAMIE MINCH

not being right can add up to a setup that doesn't feel entirely good to the player—especially if that player has been anxiously waiting for their dreamy new guitar to arrive.

If you've purchased a luthier-made guitar and it's been shipped to you, the person who sold it to you has likely been in touch about what to expect, and maybe they've even made a recommendation for a local luthier to do maintenance and repair. In the case that it's not a hand-built guitar, let's start where the guitar itself does—in the factory. Instruments from big manufacturers can be built very quickly, so while you may be paying to get something well made from quality materials, the last step in the process—a really careful, well-considered setup—may not happen. In contrast, when you pay for a pro setup, you're basically hiring an experienced tech to spend about an hour with your instrument, tailoring it to your particular needs as best they can. This step may not make financial sense to the bigger manufacturer.

We also need to consider that even if a guitar has a good basic setup when it leaves the factory, it may sit in a box for any amount of time before it's shipped to you. Obviously, the climate where a guitar is stored will have an effect on the wood. We'd like a guitar to stay at a stable 70 degrees with a humidity around 50

percent, but once that boxed-up guitar leaves the factory, that would be hard for anyone to guarantee—especially if it's shipped during cold weather or subjected to varying temperatures and humidity. I've often thought that even if manufacturers of factory-built guitars did spend time fine-tuning their instruments, the setup could be shot by the time the guitar gets to your door, so perhaps that's some savvy on the manufacturers' part—why waste time on a setup if it is likely to change? Add to this the fact that guitars tend to settle in a bit after they're built, and that it may be months between leaving the factory and getting into your hands.

I hope this helps explain why a new guitar may arrive at your home in need of at least some setup work. It's a good idea to factor in the cost of a setup (prices will vary by location and who's doing the work) when having a new factory-built guitar shipped to you. Of course, all stringed instruments need periodic setups to stay in good working order, so you could think about this as the first step toward getting to know your new guitar and optimizing it to work for you in particular. After this first step, all that's left to do is enjoy your new axe!

Mamie Minch is the co-owner of Brooklyn Lutherie and an active blues performer. brooklynlutherie.com

GOT A QUESTION?

Uncertain about guitar care and maintenance? The ins-and-outs of guitar building? Or a topic related to your gear? Ask *Acoustic Guitar's* resident repair expert Mamie Minch. Send an email titled "Repair Expert" to Senior Editor Greg Olwell at greg.olwell@stringletter.com, and he'll forward it to Mamie.



Mamie Minch



If AG selects your question for publication, you'll receive a complimentary copy of AG's *The Acoustic Guitar Owner's Manual*.

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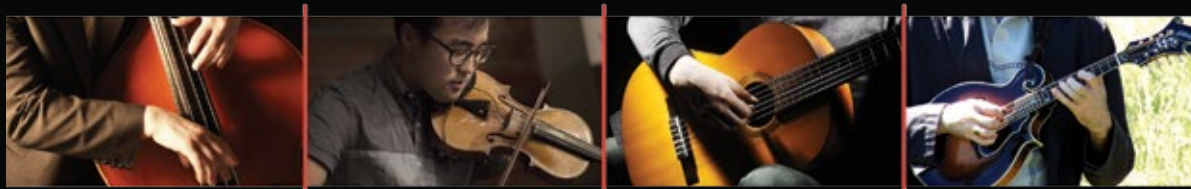
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National T-14 Cutaway

National answers players' calls for a 14-fret tricone

BY PETE MADSEN

Prior to the advent of electrified instruments, guitarists struggled to be heard in ensemble settings. So in 1927, when John Dopyera first introduced the National Tricone—a guitar with three internal resonating cones to project its sound—blues and Hawaiian lap-steel players, especially, quickly adopted these 12-fret instruments (14-fret guitars did appear several years later, but only in single-cone models) for their volume and tone.

Since Don Young and McGregor Gaines revived the National brand in the late 1980s, National Reso-Phonic Guitars has provided musicians with that sought-after tone, while also evolving the playability of its instruments to accommodate the modern musician. The M-1 Tricone, introduced a few years back, provided a much lighter-weight option with a body made from mahogany, rather than brass or steel. Cutaways have also become common to National's stable of guitars in the past two decades. Now we have National's first 14-fret cutaway tricone, the T-14, which should have resonator enthusiasts' interests piqued.

STEAMPUNK GOOD LOOKS

Maybe it's the fact that I attended the Bay Area Maker Faire recently, with its steampunk-flavored gadgetry on full display, but with its latticework sound ports and Art Deco resonator cone cover, the National T-14 looks like a sci-fi dream of what a guitar should be. The aged, "weathered steel" finish also adds to the feeling that this instrument was meant to be played by a top-hat-wearing, bifocaled mad professor from a Jules Verne story. And just as steampunk blends the ideas of the past with future-looking awareness, so does this National.

Popular culture references aside, this guitar looks way cool! The antiqued steel body is gray and brooding, and the rock maple neck has a darker tint than most National necks—my Style O, for instance, has a yellowish, tobacco sunburst tint. The open-geared black butterbean tuners give just the right accent to the ebony-veneered headstock.





MODERN PLAYABILITY

I own a National Style O, have played many other Nationals, and like it or not, the feel of the necks on these guitars is fairly consistent: chunky, made for the fingerstyle player who demands some room at the bridge in order to dig his or her fingers in—fingerpicks or no fingerpicks. The T-14 has a similar neck girth as other Nationals, but with a slightly more rounded (i.e. “modern”) profile and a nut width of 1.82 inches that gives even bigger hands ample room to maneuver. The satin finish on the neck also makes for a smooth feel from the nut on up to the 16th fret on the treble strings.

As a biscuit bridge single-cone resonator player, I found the tricone’s cover over the T-bar bridge a bit cumbersome; it placed my picking hand a little farther away from the strings and made it a bit difficult for me to adjust the amount of string dampening. In addition, the T-14 was set up with slightly lower action than I am accustomed to on Nationals, which made bottleneck slide playing a bit more challenging. However, it feels great to be able to navigate beyond the 12th fret on my slide without lifting my entire hand above the fretboard. If this were my main slide guitar, though, I would consider raising the action a bit.

DARK WARMTH

Compared to my single-cone Style O, the T-14 has a darker tone, a slightly muted yet warm sound that pulls you in and makes you want to dig deeper. Many players relish the sound of bottleneck slide on Nationals and that works very well here, but this guitar is as comfortable in standard tuning playing jazz standards as it is in open G tuning (D G D G B D).

Within its own dark dynamic range, it has a good balance between the bass and treble strings, and I found myself losing track of time when playing. I was having a grand time improvising my way around the neck in open G with my slide, until I realized I was supposed to pick

up my son from school in five minutes! Yikes!

Thirty minutes later, I was back at it, this time in standard tuning. I tried out some fast-paced ragtime and what was cause for minor concern for bottleneck (low action) was a blessing for Joplin-esque excursions around the fretboard. It was very easy moving up and down the neck.

RESONATOR-RAMA

As a blues-oriented player who flirts with jazz, I can see how the T-14 would appeal to jazzers: the lower action, neck feel, and access to the higher frets give players more freedom to improvise and explore. Twelve frets to the body definitely limits your options, but to the blues player, this limitation helps to define the sound.

Before it ended up in my hands, the T-14 got passed around a bit, with a few other players chiming in with feedback. Senior editor Greg Olwell brought it to a few gigs with a guitarist who usually plays a brass-bodied tricone for an all-acoustic restaurant gig. Though he said that he missed some of the low-end sweetness of his 12-fret guitar, he kept gravitating back to the T-14 for numerous sets, because he loved the feel of the neck as well as the access to the high end of the fingerboard. Likewise, Hot Club of San Francisco guitarist Paul Mehling also preferred the feel of the neck and ease of play over the custom 12-fret brass-bodied tricone he owns.

WRAP

If you have ever played a guitar from National, you won’t be surprised by the quality of the workmanship on the T-14—it’s excellent. But, if you only think of them as blues guitars, you might be surprised how this guitar feels and plays and how it might be a good match for many different playing situations. National also offers an optional pickup system that will increase your performance flexibility. For a bit more you can also order the T-14 in brass or German silver. The provided hardshell case is of good quality and should protect your instrument for years to come.

AC



SPECS

BODY 14-fret steel cutaway body with weathered steel finish; three 5-15/16"-wide aluminum cones; aluminum T-bridge

NECK 25-21/32"-scale hard-rock maple neck with satin polyester-resin finish; 19 fret ebony fingerboard with mother-of-pearl dot inlays; 16" radius; 1.82"-wide bone nut; National tuners with black buttons; ebony headstock veneer

OTHER 7 pounds, 15 ounces; John Pearse 600L phosphor-bronze light strings (.012–.053); hardshell case; National Slimline pickup (optional)

PRICE \$3,295 (MAP)

MADE IN USA

nationalguitars.com

RESONATOR CONCERNS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Before you dive into the world of resonator guitars, there are some things you should consider. If you are shopping for a resonator and are not already familiar with the various options—tricone vs. single cone, brass vs. steel or wood, cutaway vs. non-cutaway—you should do some research and play as many of the different configurations as possible to see which one fits your style. I find the tricone bridge cover a bit cumbersome for my style of playing, but then I’m used to the biscuit bridge and could probably adapt to the tricone over time. If your style demands access to the higher reaches of the fretboard, you’ll definitely want a cutaway.

Tone-wise, wood, brass, and steel have distinct characteristics that you should consider. Brass has a bell-like chime; steel has a darker, more direct sound; wood has warmth, but a little less volume.

Another consideration is how the guitar blends with other instruments. If you play your resonator with a band, you may want your solos to stand out, but also want your rhythm sound to blend well with the other musicians. If you play mainly solo then you have more latitude.



Ortega QUANTUMloop

A handy new electronic tool for adventurous acoustic guitarists and singer-songwriters

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

I never thought much of electronic looping—that is, until I heard the brilliant guitarist Joe Gore play a solo gig at a bar in San Francisco. With just an electric guitar, a laptop, and a foot controller, Gore used looping technology to evoke the sound of a full band, percussion and bass included, putting his off-center spin on songs by Fleetwood Mac, Taylor Swift, and others.

As luck would have it, not long after that gig, I received for review a new looping system and digital percussion device ideally suited for the acoustic guitar—Ortega's QUANTUMloop and its optional expression trigger pedal. I won't necessarily be matching wits with Gore when it comes to looping anytime soon, but I had endless fun exploring the QUANTUMloop, which has tons of

sonic and textural potential for gigging solo guitarists and singer-songwriters.

WHAT IT DOES

The QUANTUMloop builds on Ortega's line of stompboxes—products like the Horse Kick, which allows guitarists to add hands-free percussive sounds to their music. Like Ortega's other stompboxes, the QUANTUMloop comes in an attractive solid wooden enclosure, in this case mahogany, an attractive visual complement to any acoustic guitar. While the Horse Kick has one sound—a sampled cajon—the QUANTUMloop has two banks with a total of 16 different sounds (see specs sidebar for a full list), plus each bank has space for two user-defined sounds. The

QUANTUMloop is also a looping station, with a loop length of up to five minutes.

BEAT BOX

I auditioned the QUANTUMloop with a Breedlove acoustic-electric guitar, a Fender Acoustasonic amplifier, and Ortega's Economy Series instrument cables. Before exploring the looping aspect, I checked out the percussion sounds in each bank. It's easy to scroll through them by tapping on a footswitch and to hear them by stomping on the left side of the box. The samples all sound warm and realistic, and I especially like the sound of the fat kick drum in tandem with some basic open-chord strumming. I appreciate that the stomping aspect is touch-sensitive—though, if you prefer an even volume level, the



dynamic effect can be disengaged with a mini toggle switch on the left side of the unit.

Plugging in the optional QUANTUMexp expression trigger pedal, I was able to maximize the percussion effects by using sounds from both Bank A and Bank B at the same time. It took a bit of practice to get everything coordinated between my feet and hands, but it was very satisfying to do a kick drum sound with one foot and a snare with the other, while strumming basic rock patterns on the guitar. My only complaint is that the trigger pedal operates on a 9-volt battery and not an AC adapter.

Next, I connected the QUANTUMloop to my Mac with a USB cable. It was a breeze to download the unit's software (available for PC or Mac) and to import samples I had created in GarageBand using a glass bottle and a toy piano and then use them as stomp effects. The QUANTUMloop supports sound files of up to 260 KB (five seconds), in MP3 or WAV format, which you can upload to two available slots in each bank. Some sonic tinkers might find it limiting to only be able to store four sounds, but, between these and

the preset sounds, there are certainly sufficient options for the average guitarist.

IN THE LOOP

Then I experimented with the QUANTUMloop's looping feature. It felt intuitive to use the foot-switch to record and layer guitar sounds, and I enjoyed mixing different textures and registers and hearing everything played back with fidelity. Without much previous looping experience, I could easily create on-the-fly backdrops for soloing, or build a melody and a chord structure on top of a bass line.

Things got really interesting when I brought in the percussion elements, whether for creating the illusion of a small ensemble or creating strange loops merging sounds like '80s Electro with looped acoustic guitar parts. The QUANTUMloop feels rife with possibilities—sonic combinations I hadn't previously considered. It's so easy to use, yet its range of potential applications, from doing basic one-person performances to spinning complex webs of sound, is thrilling, to say the least. **AC**

SPECS

KEY FEATURES Sampled percussion sounds in two banks: Dry Kick Drum, Fat Kick Drum, Sweet Kick Drum, '80s Electro, Deep Cajon, Slap Cajon, Doumbek Slap, Cowbell, Ballad Snare, Soul Snare, The Rim, Foot Hi Hat, The Clap, Finger Snip, Short Shake, Tambourine; space for two user-generated samples in each bank; volume control; dynamic control; looper level; 1/4" input and output; 1/4" input for optional expression trigger pedal; USB port; DC 9V power (adapter included)

OPTIONAL Expression trigger pedal: \$69.99 (MAP); Economy Series instrument cables: \$12.95–\$25.95 (MAP)

PRICE \$299.99 (MAP)

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Cordoba Mini II FMH

A good thing in
a small package

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Small-bodied guitars are quite fashionable these days, and the Mini II, a new instrument by Cordoba, is a nice example of a miniature nylon-string that's easy to play—and easy on the wallet.

The Mini II is the successor to Cordoba's popular Mini. More ukulele-like in character, the Mini has a short-scale fretboard of 20 inches and is tuned a perfect fourth higher than a standard guitar, from A to A. The standard-tuned Mini II has a slightly bigger and deeper body than the Mini, along with a longer, 22-7/8"-scale neck. It's obviously closer to the guitar end of the spectrum than its predecessor.

There are three different versions of the Mini II—the MH (layered mahogany top, back, and sides), FMH (layered flamed mahogany), and EB-CE (solid spruce top and layered striped ebony back and sides). I auditioned the FMH, a smart-looking guitar with a deeply figured body and headstock cap and faux tortoiseshell body binding and rosette. Overall, the Mini II FMH is nicely built, with an inviting satin finish and tidy interior. But the frets on our test model were a bit sharp at the ends, and they could have been better polished.

That observation aside, the Mini II plays quite well for both open and barred formations. And though I'm accustomed to longer-scale fretboards, I didn't have any problems adjusting to this instrument, thanks to its generous nut width of 1-7/8 inches. The notes sound true and clear up and down the neck—not a given on a guitar at this price point—though the bottom strings do buzz a bit when the guitar is played forcefully.

Overall, the Mini II has a dulcet voice, and what it lacks in sustain and loudness, it makes up for in warmth. The guitar sounds right at home whether I'm working on the classical studies in this issue's Weekly Workout (see p. 56), playing through Adam Levy's Willie Nelson lesson from the July 2018 issue of AG, or just strumming cowboy chords with my thumb.



SPECS

BODY 14-fret mini size; layered flamed mahogany top, back, and sides; fan bracing; composite bridge; satin polyurethane finish

NECK Mahogany neck; composite fretboard; 22-7/8" scale length; 1-7/8" NuBone nut; Cordoba satin nickel tuners with black buttons; satin polyurethane finish

EXTRAS Strap buttons; Savarez Cristal Corum High Tension 500CJ strings

PRICE MH: \$129 (MAP);
FMH: \$179 (MAP);
EB-CE: \$249 (MAP)

MADE IN China

cordobaguitars.com

Given the instrument's diminutive size, I asked my daughter, who is six and has recently been enjoying exploring the ukulele and piano, to take the Mini II for a spin. She found it much more manageable than the full-size guitars we have at home, and quickly bonded with it, discovering her own

chord shapes and insisting that she teach them to me.

The Mini II would make a perfect starter guitar for a child, or a nice travel option for an adult player. And, starting at \$129 MAP for the plain mahogany version, it's a buy that's hard to beat in a good-quality new guitar. **AG**

D'Addario String Height Gauge

A versatile tool for DIY and non-DIY types alike

BY GREG OLWELL

You don't have to be the kind of person who loves working on guitars to find a lot of uses for D'Addario's new String Height Gauge. Sure, luthiers will probably want one in the toolbox, but even players who don't know a fret file from a nail file might find this tool handy for diagnosing a problem or discovering why one guitar might feel more comfortable to play than another does.

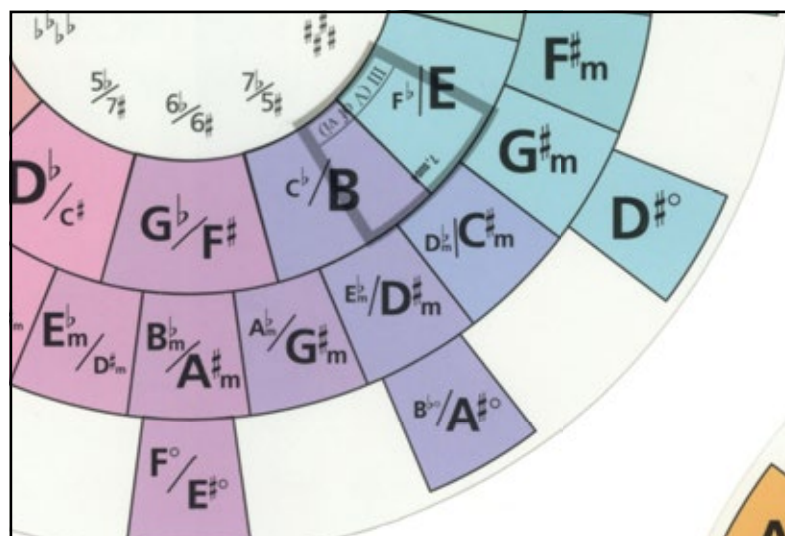
About the same size as a credit card, the String Height Gauge (\$14 MSRP; \$10 MAP) has both metric and US measurements etched onto a stainless steel plate. String heights are lined up along the long edge of the front and are measured in ten-thousandths of an inch and millimeters. Height measurements are easy to make—just lay the gauge on the top of the 12th fret and measure to the bottom of the string. The markings on the short and long edges can also be used to work out other setup aspects, such as neck relief or string spacing.


The reverse side acts as a ruler, again in both US and metric measurements, and adds a conversion table and recommended string heights for acoustic, electric, and bass guitars. Since the gauge also functions as a highly precise straightedge, you can use it to find any low spots on your frets that may be causing a buzz by laying it across several frets and trying to rock it back and forth.

Even if you're not a home (or a pro) luthier, the gauge is useful for figuring out why some guitars feel better to you than others, or if



something has changed on your guitar, like a low-humidity situation making your guitar more difficult to play. For example, if you find a guitar that plays a lot better than your own, you can use the String Height Gauge to record what it is that feels so good to your fingers and have a professional try to duplicate it on your guitar. daddario.com **AG**





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Joey Ryan (left) and Kenneth Pattengale

Milk Carton Kids
*All the Things That I Did and
 All the Things That I Didn't Do*
 (Rebel)

PLAYLIST

Reality Check

The Milk Carton Kids grow up on the acoustic duo's fourth album

BY GREG CAHILL

A recent study by the University of California at Irvine found that today's pop songs are 30 percent slower and far sadder than in years past. That said, melancholy millennials won't be disappointed by *All the Things That I Did and All the Things That I Didn't Do*, the latest album by the L.A.-based Americana duo the Milk Carton Kids. This is their first release in three years. Filled with a sense of intense longing and introspection, it moves beyond the beautiful, bitter-sweet sound that first attracted fans to find the Kids carrying the weight of the world on their collective shoulders.

The Milk Carton Kids—vocalists and guitarists Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan—stepped into the spotlight in 2011 with their fresh-faced image, soothing Everly Brothers-inspired vocal harmonies, and bright fingerstyle guitar work. Pattengale, a longtime smoker, is now a cancer survivor and recently ended a seven-year relationship—both events inform the album's often stark, solemn lyrics. Lyrically, you can file this material under the category Rodney Crowell was

dubbed “beautiful despair.” Producer Joe Henry has expanded the duo's acoustic guitar palette with sparse arrangements enhanced by violin, pedal steel, and electric guitar. His tasteful production is reminiscent of the ambient treatments employed by producer Daniel Lanois and contributes to the album's moody quality.

All the Things That I Did opens with “Just Look at Us Now,” a calling card signified by gentle acoustic guitars and a subtle electric-guitar wash beneath the lyrics “When I was a kid, you could look in my eyes and see the whole world spinning there.” It sets the tone for the album's sense of innocence lost. The song also references the mistaken notion that war can settle differences satisfactorily. Throughout the album, Pattengale and Ryan use personal conflict to ponder the political—an effective and subtle metaphorical device that blends the macro and the micro emotional landscapes. For example, “Mourning in America” is inspired by the 2016 presidential election, yet the song never names a certain New York businessman,

nor does it make any overt reference to national politics. The title is a play on Ronald Reagan's famous 1984 political TV ad “It's Morning in America, Again,” which evoked small-town values and a mythical, carefree time.

“One More for the Road,” a powerful ten-minute-and-23-second meditation, serves as the album's centerpiece. It features Pattengale's intricate lead work grounded in natural minor modes and built mostly on single notes, hammer-ons and pull-offs, half steps, and close intervals. Performed by Pattengale on his 1954 Martin 0-15, the song has a snaking raga-style and psychedelic mood that aptly shows the influence of Dave Rawlings on the guitarist.

The album closes with the title track, reduced here to “All the Things” and including the lyric, “I had the weight of the world on my chest, well, sometimes it feels that way.”

Sometimes you just need to get those things off your chest—after all, it can be a cold, cruel world.

AC

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Altan
The Gap of Dreams
(Compass)

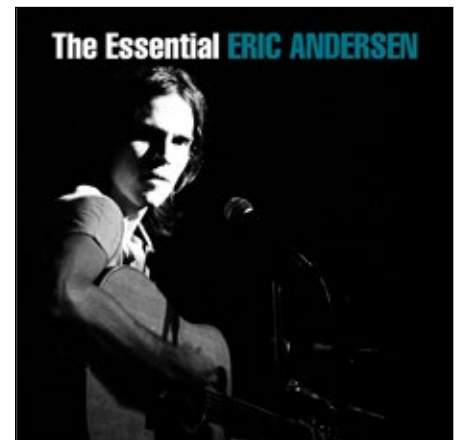
Beautiful sadness marks Irish band's latest

After starting as a flute-and-fiddle duo behind Belfast singer Albert Fry, Altan has grown into Ireland's premier Irish trad band and the foremost stewards of County Donegal's musical traditions. They've been together for so long—nearly 35 years, one way or another—that they've started playing tunes written by their children. That's how *The Gap of Dreams* begins, with a set of jigs written by fiddler Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, her 14-year old daughter, and guitarist Mark Kelly's 18-year-old son. The tunes are sweetly, gracefully lithe, showing the band at its gentle, propulsive best.

Over the decades, Kelly, Ciarán Curran (bouzouki), and Daithí Sproule (guitar) have created the tightest, quietest rhythm section imaginable, beautifully complementing one another here on "Níon a' Bhaoigheallaigh," a song about two lovers who meet at a wake, "Seán sa Cheo/Tuar/Oíche Fheidhmiúil," a spirited set of reels in the key of D, and "Cumha an Oileáin," about a widow leaving her island home for the last time. Their playing is perfectly seamless, their touch delicate, as they blend chording, fingerpicking, and octaves to match the stateliness of Ní Mhaonaigh's vocals, which continue to grow thinner, more fragile with time.

There's a beautiful, ethereal sadness that carries *The Gap of Dreams*—its title drawn from a ballad about the thin line between the living and the dead. It's a sadness that can only come with age, with loss, and as the members of Altan take their place as elders, from looking both backward and forward.

—Kenny Berkowitz



Eric Andersen
The Essential Eric Andersen
(Arista/Legacy)

Anthology shows breadth of folk singer's long career

Many folk-music fans feel Eric Andersen never got the fame and respect he deserved. During the '60s, this Greenwich Village singer-songwriter signed to Vanguard and gained a reputation for poetic songs, as well as such socially conscious tomes as the Woody Guthrie-inspired "Dusty Box Car Wall" and "Thirsty Boots," the latter a tribute to the civil-rights activists known as the Freedom Riders. Ultimately, Bob Dylan, the subject of Andersen's scathing indictment "The Hustler," overshadowed this artist's career.

But Andersen had bigger problems than Dylan—in the early '70s, his label lost the master tapes to what is arguably his best work. That material emerged two decades later as *Stages: The Lost Album*, and several of its beautifully produced songs form the core of this 23-track, two-CD release. If you can judge a man by his friends, then Andersen is a champ—Joni Mitchell ("Blue River"), Richard Thompson ("Hills of Tuscany"), Phil Ochs ("Plains of Nebraska-O," from 1964; Andersen's first recording), Leon Russell and Pete Drake ("Wild Crow Blues"), Lou Reed ("You Can't Relive the Past"), David Bromberg (dobro on Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried"), and Rick Danko ("Driftin' Away" and "Keep This Love Alive") are among the luminaries appearing on this album.

The impressive package spans 45 years and 19 different albums put out on 10 labels, hitting many highpoints along the way, but largely steering clear of the early Vanguard material, known for its inferior production. What's here, though, should finally give Andersen his due.

—GC



GORDON ROSS

JOI Harmonic Hendrix Home Guitar

Canadian luthier builds guitars with wood from Jimi's childhood abode

BY GREG OLWELL

Jimi Hendrix remains an icon for many guitarists, and a British Columbia-based maker is building a limited series of guitars using pieces of Hendrix's childhood home in Seattle for a few of those lucky—and well-heeled—fans.

Reuben Forsland of Vancouver Island's JOI Guitars forged an agreement with Experience Hendrix, the Hendrix family-owned business that controls Jimi's estate, to build guitars using materials from a modest home that Jimi lived in for several years after his father Al purchased it in the spring of 1953. The house, built sometime between 1917 and 1920, was originally located at 2603 South Washington St. in Seattle's

Central District, and was later “deconstructed” by a real estate developer and put into storage.

The resulting guitars integrate several parts of Jimi's home, which Forsland says was built using local old-growth woods. The top repurposes fir baseboards that came from either Jimi's room or the living room. The neck uses fir from the floorboards, with additional support coming from ebony strips, a truss rod, and two carbon-fiber rods. Floorboard nails are turned into position markers on the fingerboard's face, which also includes Jimi's signature inlaid at the 12th fret, while the side dots come from the home's copper wiring and are surrounded by sterling silver. The rosette is

made from crushed paint chips removed from the floorboards. Internally, the neck- and end-blocks come from one of the house's structural 2x4s. African blackwood, a rosewood family wood that looks like an ebony, is used for the guitar's back and sides.

Forsland has an agreement to build ten guitars with this wood, and at the time of publishing, the fourth of the Harmonic Hendrix Home Guitars was under construction. Under a licensing agreement with Experience Hendrix, each guitar will cost \$25,000, with a sizable portion of each sale going toward the Jimi Hendrix Park Foundation. For more images and video, visit AcousticGuitar.com. **AG**



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